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## A SHORTER MILTON



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# A SHORTER MILTON

Selected and Edited by  
F. J. TICKNER, B.A. (OXON.)



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## INTRODUCTION

JOHN MILTON was born in London on December 9, 1608, eight years before the death of William Shakespeare ; and he died on November 8, 1674, fourteen years after the restoration of Charles II., and three years after John Dryden had been made poet laureate.

It is only natural that Milton should have found inspiration in the work of his great Elizabethan predecessors. He himself acknowledged his allegiance to Edmund Spenser, the author of the *Faerie Queene*, and at the age of twenty-two he wrote an *Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare*, whom he called ' Dear son of memory, great heir of fame.' He was not, however, concerned with continuing any literary tradition ; nor did he associate himself with the contemporary school of metaphysical poets. He was a great enough man to seek out his own path rather than follow in the footsteps of others, and in his last years, when a new generation of poets, among them John Dryden, had come on the scene, Milton was still pursuing his own majestic way.

As a child, Milton was an eager scholar, clever beyond others of his age, and as he grew older his passion for study continued. His main interests were Greek and Roman literature, theology, and history, both ancient and modern ; but there were no limits to the pains he would take to increase his fund of learning, and at every turn his poems show his vast knowledge of a variety of subjects.

## A Shorter Milton

His learning naturally influenced his poetry. In *Paradise Lost*, for example, he writes in blank verse, the metre used by Shakespeare for his plays; but Milton's blank verse is more studied. Allusions to classical literature or to the Bible are frequent; often a single word has a wealth of learned meaning, and Milton is much more influenced than Shakespeare by the Latin blank verse of Virgil. In *Samson Agonistes* his model was not his fellow-countrymen Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, but the Greek writers of tragedy—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

Moreover, Milton lived in some of the most stirring times in English history. When he was thirty-four the Civil War broke out between Charles I. and Parliament, and seven years later the king was beheaded in Whitehall. Milton threw in his lot with the Parliamentary party, and not only devoted his energy and literary talents to the Puritan cause, but also hastened the loss of his own eyesight in his zeal.

In these years there is an interesting contrast between Milton and the Elizabethans. The sonnet, which was to his predecessors a medium for the passionate expression of the poetry of love, was used by him to express personal sentiments, to praise prominent politicians, and even to discuss matters of controversy. One sonnet addressed to his 'late espoused saint,' Katherine Woodcock, the second wife whom, because of his blindness, he never saw, is an exception, and comes nearer to the original purpose of sonnet writing.

The zeal for politics and religion which dragged Milton into controversy, set him to work at the Foreign Office, kept him almost entirely from writing poetry for twenty years, and accelerated his blindness, was zeal for a losing cause, for a cause which, at any rate for the time being, was overwhelmed by the restoration of King Charles II. in

## Introduction

1660. In those days, when political arguments were often carried on by force, he was lucky to escape the revenge of bigoted opponents. For fourteen years he lived in quiet obscurity, and devoted himself to writing some of the noblest poetry in the English language.

Milton's life was thus divided into three periods : for the first thirty years he was the eager student and the poet ; for the next twenty-two the politician and the pamphleteer ; and for the last fourteen once more the poet, when the 'good old cause' of his politics seemed dead.

As a young man he was good looking and had considerable charm of manner. His father had been disinherited by Catholic parents for turning Protestant, and adopted the profession of a scrivener, which brought him a comfortable income. He was thus able to give young John a good education at St. Paul's School, London, and Christ's College, Cambridge, and to maintain him in retirement at Horton in Buckinghamshire in the leisured position of a student of literature for five years, as well as to send him on a lengthy tour of Italy. The elder Milton was also a musician of considerable ability, and there is no doubt that as a poet his son owed a good deal to his father's instruction in music. Although the worthy scrivener was, perhaps at times, treated in a rather patronizing way by his intellectually brilliant son, John showed real affection for the father who had done so much for him, and he dutifully provided for him in his old age.

At college Milton, who had no doubts as to his ability as a scholar, seems to have suffered from intellectual conceit. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was unpopular among his tutors, whom he regarded for the most part as men of inferior ability, and among his fellow students, who nicknamed him 'the Lady of Christ's,' in reference to his fastidious-



## A Shorter Milton

ness and his good-looking, but delicate, appearance. Later some of his early unpopularity wore off, and people who came to know him well spoke kindly of his refined, courteous, and agreeable disposition.

In the years of his stay at Horton, between the time when he left Cambridge and his journey to the Continent in 1638, Milton wrote the most beautiful of his shorter poems: *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. When he returned to England, instead of going back to his country retreat at Horton he went to live in London, undertook the task of educating his nephews, and plunged into political and theological writing. Apart from a few political sonnets, he published no more poetry of importance until after the Restoration.

Some of Milton's admirers have regarded his prose works as occupying an unfortunate interlude in his life as a poet; but those who have the time to read them, and the understanding to follow Milton through the sordid wrangles of politics and theology, are rewarded by finding in them noble passages of English prose. They complete the picture of Milton as a man who followed eagerly and sincerely the important issues which agitated the England of his day. He was attracted by the force of events, which seemed to him to be leading his country to the triumph of liberty and right over tyranny and arbitrary government. As the struggle went on he became a profound admirer of Cromwell, the man of action, whom he was proud to serve in the capacity of Latin secretary, his duties being to write letters of State in that language, which at that time was used for correspondence with foreign powers. At an early stage in the Civil War he wrote *Areopagitica* in defence of the freedom of the Press.

The victory of Parliament and the triumph of the Lord Protector, whom he so much admired, did not

## Introduction

obscure from Milton the fact that the principles for which he fought to some extent suffered in the struggle. In spite of his energetic writing against monarchy and the bishops and his appointment as Latin secretary, the classical student and writer of *Comus* must sometimes have seemed strange company for the sterner Puritans and the buff-coated soldiers of the Protectorate.

Another event which fits strangely into Milton's life is his marriage, in 1643, to Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royalist family. Quite apart from the difference in their politics, the marriage was not a success. We have only Milton's account to judge from, and in controversy he was never inclined to make much allowance for the other person's point of view. Whatever the facts or the merits of the case may have been, Mary went back to her parents very shortly after her marriage, and her husband wrote three extremely bitter pamphlets on divorce. But here again Milton shows his generosity, for, two years later, he not only became reconciled with his wife, but took her Royalist family under his protection and found room for them in his house, although he complained that they stunned him with their noise.

Milton lived seven years with his wife after their reconciliation, and they had three daughters. In 1656, four years after her death, he married Katherine Woodcock, but she died fifteen months later. In spite of this brief spell of happy married life with his second wife, the memory of his first impressions dominated his outlook on women and on marriage. Mary seems to have been intellectually quite unsuitable to her learned husband, and so in his later poems man is the superior being, who meets his downfall through his association with woman: Adam in *Paradise Lost* is tempted by the less constant Eve, and in *Samson Agonistes*, Samson is beguiled by the

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shallow and deceitful Dalila. Nevertheless, in his old age, Milton was married yet a third time, to Elizabeth Minshull, who looked after the bodily comforts of her helpless and blind husband.

His blindness became complete in 1651, the year of Cromwell's final triumph at Worcester. During the last years of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, Milton reconciled himself to the loss of his eyesight and enjoyed a period of serenity. Physically, apart from his blindness, he was still in his prime ; an observer speaks of his ' beautifull and well proportioned body.' To these years belong his second and more fortunate marriage. He had high hopes of the Commonwealth which he cherished even after Cromwell's death. His thoughts turned again to poetry, and he embarked on *Paradise Lost*, an epic with the ambitious theme of the creation and the fall of man ; of the events which preceded the creation, the expulsion of Satan and the rebel angels from Heaven ; and of the story of the world after the fall.

*Paradise Lost* thus embraces the whole of space, time, and eternity ; and Milton seems already to have accomplished some of his stupendous task, when the Restoration, and the end of all his political hopes, came as a sudden and overwhelming blow. The earlier books of the poem have an action and a vigour which is absent from the later part. The first part of the story tells of the fall of Satan and his angels from Heaven, and its vigorous movement has led some critics to regard Satan as the real hero of the poem. The later books, which were completed after Milton had recovered from the shock of the Restoration, are in a more contemplative mood, and are handicapped by the fact that the real central figures of the story, Adam and Eve, remain passive until their temptation by Satan moves them to an action which, unfortunately, has the direst consequences for them. Never-

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theless, Milton succeeds in writing a poem of rare beauty, which remains perhaps the greatest monument of English epic verse.

In his later years he published two more important works, in keeping with the more thoughtful mood of his political disappointment and disillusion ; *Paradise Regained*, which describes, on a briefer scale than *Paradise Lost*, the temptation of Christ in the Wilderness, and *Samson Agonistes*, a play in the manner of a Greek tragedy, about the Jewish hero in his blindness and captivity. In this, his last poem, Milton describes with an intensity, which is often a personal expression of his own feelings, the bitterness of blindness and defeat, and the ultimate conquest of the mind over the adversity of earthly misfortunes.



# A SHORTER MILTON

## ODE ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

### I

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn  
Wherein the Son of Heav'n's eternal King,  
Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born,  
Our great redemption from above did bring ;  
For so the holy sages once did sing,  
That he our deadly forfeit should release,  
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

### 2

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,  
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,  
Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high council-  
table,  
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,  
He laid aside ; and here with us to be,  
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,  
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal  
clay.

### 3

Say Heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein  
Afford a present to the Infant God ?  
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,

## A Shorter Milton

To welcome him to this his new abode ;  
Now while the Heav'n by the sun's team untrod,  
Hath took no print of the approaching light,  
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons  
bright ?

### 4

See how from far upon the eastern road  
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet :  
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,  
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet ;  
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,  
And join thy voice unto the angel quire,  
From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd  
fire.

## *The Hymn*

### I

It was the winter wild,  
While the Heav'n-born child,  
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies ;  
Nature in awe to him  
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,  
With her great Master so to sympathize :  
It was no season then for her  
To wanton with the sun her lusty paramour.

### 2

Only with speeches fair  
She woos the gentle Air  
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,

*Star-led wizards, The three Magi.  
Gaudy trim, Holiday attire.*

## The Morning of Christ's Nativity

And on her naked shame,  
Pollute with sinful blame,  
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw,  
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes  
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

### 3

But he her fears to cease,  
Sent down the meek-ey'd Peace ;  
She, crown'd with olive green, came softly  
sliding  
Down through the turning sphere  
His ready harbinger,  
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing,  
And waving wide her myrtle wand,  
Age strikes a universal peace through sea and  
land.

### 4

Nor war, or battle's sound  
Was heard the world around :  
The idle spear and shield were high up hung ;  
The hooked chariot stood  
Unstain'd with hostile blood,  
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,  
And kings sate still with awful eye,  
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

### 5

But peaceful was the night  
Wherein the Prince of light  
His reign of peace upon the earth began :

*Harbinger*, Forerunner.  
(4,172)

*Awful*, Full of awe, awestruck.  
17



## A Shorter Milton

The winds with wonder whist  
Smoothly the waters kist,  
    Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,  
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,  
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed  
    wave.

### 6

The stars with deep amaze  
Stand fixt in steadfast gaze,  
    Bending one way their precious influence,  
And will not take their flight,  
For all the morning light,  
    Or Lucifer that often warn'd them thence ;  
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,  
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

### 7

And though the shady gloom  
Had given day her room,  
    The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,  
And hid his head for shame,  
As his inferior flame  
    The new enlighten'd world no more should  
    need ;  
He saw a greater Sun appear  
Than his bright throne, or burning axletree could  
    bear.

### 8

The shepherds on the lawn,  
Or ere the point of dawn,  
    Sat simply chatting in a rustic row ;

*Whist, Hushed.*

*Lucifer, The morning star, the planet Venus.*

*Orbs, Orbits, courses.*

## The Morning of Christ's Nativity

Full little thought they than,  
That the mighty Pan

Was kindly come to live with them below ;  
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,  
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

### 9

When such music sweet  
Their hearts and ears did greet,  
As never was by mortal finger strook ;  
Divinely-warbled voice  
Answering the stringed noise,  
As all their souls in blissful rapture took :  
The air such pleasure loth to lose,  
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heav'nly  
close.

### 10

Nature that heard such sound  
Beneath the hollow round  
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,  
Now was almost won  
To think her part was done,  
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling ;  
She knew such harmony alone  
Could hold all Heav'n and Earth in happier union.

### 11

At last surrounds their sight  
A globe of circular light,  
That with long beams the shame-fac'd night  
array'd ;

*Than*, Then.

*Noise*, Band, orchestra.

*Pan*, The god of nature.

*Close*, Closing notes of a tune.

*Cynthia's seat*, Mount Cynthus in the island of Delos, the birth-place of Artemis, also called Cynthia, goddess of the moon.

## A Shorter Milton

The helmed Cherubim,  
And sworded Seraphim,  
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings display'd,  
Harping in loud and solemn quire,  
With unexpressive notes to Heav'n's new-born  
Heir.

### 12

Such music (as 'tis said)  
Before was never made,  
But when of old the sons of morning sung ;  
While the Creator great  
His constellations set,  
And the well-balanc'd world on hinges hung,  
And cast the dark foundations deep,  
And bid the welt'ring waves their oozy channel  
keep.

### 13

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,  
Once bless our human ears,  
(If ye have power to touch our senses so)  
And let your silver chime  
Move in melodious time ;  
And let the base of Heav'n's deep organ blow,  
And with your ninefold harmony  
Make up full consort to th' angelic symphony.

*Unexpressive, Inexpressible.*

*Sons of morning, Morning stars.* In the Book of Job (xxxviii. 7) the morning stars are spoken of as singing together at the time of the creation.

*Welt'ring, Rolling.*

*Spheres.* The music of the spheres was made by the planets as they moved in their courses ; it was supposed that men could not hear this music because their hearts were not pure.

## The Morning of Christ's Nativity

14

For if such holy song  
Enwrap our fancy long,  
Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold,  
And speckl'd Vanity  
Will sicken soon and die,  
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould,  
And Hell itself will pass away,  
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering  
day.

15

Yea Truth and Justice then  
Will down return to men,  
Th' enamell'd arras of the rainbow wearing,  
And mercy set between,  
Thron'd in celestial sheen,  
With radiant feet the tissu'd clouds down  
steering :  
And Heav'n as at some festival,  
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

16

But wisest Fate says no,  
This must not yet be so,  
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy,  
That on the bitter cross  
Must redeem our loss ;  
So both himself and us to glorify :  
Yet first to those ychain'd in sleep,  
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through  
the deep,

*Arras*, Tapestry hanging.

*Ychain'd*, Chained.

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17

With such a horrid clang  
As on mount Sinai rang  
While the red fire, and smould'ring clouds out  
brake :  
The aged earth aghast  
With terror of that blast,  
Shall from the surface to the centre shake ;  
When at the world's last session,  
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread  
his throne.

18

And then at last our bliss  
Full and perfect is,  
But now begins ; for from this happy day  
Th' old Dragon under ground  
In straiter limits bound,  
Not half so far casts his usurped sway,  
And wrath to see his kingdom fail,  
Swindges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

19

The oracles are dumb,  
No voice or hideous hum  
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiv-  
ing.  
Apollo from his shrine  
Can no more divine,  
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.

*Swindges*, Swings.

*Delphos*. Apollo was the god of the sun. The oracle at Delphi was supposed to be inspired by him. The suggestion is that with the coming of Christ the oracle would cease to exist.

## The Morning of Christ's Nativity

No nightly trance, or breathed spell  
Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetic  
cell.

20

The lonely mountains o'er,  
And the resounding shore,  
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament ;  
From haunted spring, and dale  
Edg'd with poplar pale,  
The parting genius is with sighing sent ;  
With flower-inwov'n tresses torn  
The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets  
mourn.

21

In consecrated earth,  
And on the holy hearth,  
The Lars, and Lemures moan with midnight  
plaint ;  
In urns, and altars round,  
A drear and dying sound  
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint ;  
And the chill marble seems to sweat,  
While each peculiar Power foregoes his wonted  
seat.

22

Peor, and Baalim,  
Forsake their temples dim,  
With that twice-batter'd god of Palestine,

*Cell.* The oracle was given in the inmost part of the temple, where an intoxicating vapour rose from the ground ; the priest or priestess sat in a trance caused by this vapour, and was supposed thereby to be inspired by Apollo.

*Genius*, Guardian spirit.

*Lemures*, Shades of the dead.

*Peor and Baalim*, Phœnician gods.

*Parting*, Departing.

*Lars*, Household gods.

*Flamens*, Priests.

23

## A Shorter Milton

And mooned Ashtaroth,  
Heav'n's queen and mother both,  
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine,  
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,  
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Tham-  
muz mourn.

### 23

And sullen Moloch fled,  
Hath left in shadows dread,  
His burning idol all of blackest hue,  
In vain with cymbals' ring  
They call the grisly king,  
In dismal dance about the furnace blue ;  
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,  
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis haste.

### 24

Nor is Osiris seen  
In Memphian grove, or green,  
Trampling the unshower'd grass with lowings  
loud :  
Nor can he be at rest  
Within his sacred chest,  
Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud,  
In vain with timbrell'd anthems dark  
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipp'd ark.

*Ashtaroth*, Syrian goddess of beauty.

*Lybic Hammon*, Egyptian god, protector of flocks and herds.

*Thammuz*, Adonis, a Syrian youth, beloved by Ashtaroth ; he died of a wound received from a boar.

*Moloch*, An idol, to whom children were sacrificed.

*Isis*, Egyptian goddess of the earth, wife of Osiris, the Nile god.

*Orus*, Egyptian sun god.

*Anubis*, Another Egyptian god, with the head of a dog.

*Memphian*, Belonging to Memphis, a city of Egypt.

## The Morning of Christ's Nativity

25

He feels from Juda's land  
The dreaded Infant's hand,  
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn ;  
Nor all the gods beside,  
Longer dare abide,  
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine :  
Our Babe to show his Godhead true,  
Can in his swaddling bands control the damned  
crew.

26

So when the sun in bed,  
Curtain'd with cloudy red,  
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,  
The flocking shadows pale  
Troop to th' infernal jail,  
Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave,  
And the yellow-skirted fayes,  
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-  
lov'd maze.

27

But see the Virgin blest,  
Hath laid her Babe to rest.  
Time is our tedious song should here have  
ending,  
Heav'n's youngest teemed star  
Hath fixt her polish'd car,  
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attend-  
ing :  
And all about the courtly stable.  
Bright-harness'd Angels sit in order serviceable.

*Typhon*, The murderer of Osiris, defeated in battle by Isis.  
*Bright-harness'd*, In bright armour.

25



AN EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE  
DRAMATIC POET W. SHAKESPEAR

WHAT needs my Shakespear for his honour'd  
bones,  
The labour of an age in piled stones,  
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid  
Under a star-ypointing pyramid ?  
Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy  
name ?  
Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.  
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art  
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart  
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd book  
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,  
Then thou our fancy of itself bereaving,  
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving ;  
And so sepulcher'd in such pomp dost lie,  
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

*Star-ypointing*, Pointing to the stars. Y- should only be used with a *past* participle ; here Milton uses it erroneously with a present participle.

## AT A SOLEMN MUSIC

BLEST pair of Sirens, pledges of Heav'n's joy,  
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,  
Wed your divine sounds, and mixt power employ  
Dead things with inbreath'd sense able to pierce ;  
And to our high-rai'd phantasy present  
That undisturbed song of pure content,  
Aye sung before the sapphire-colour'd throne  
To him that sits thereon  
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,  
Where the bright Seraphim in burning row  
Their loud uplifted angel trumpets blow,  
And the cherubic host in thousand quires  
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,  
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,  
Hymns devout and holy psalms  
Singing everlastingly ;  
That we on Earth with undiscording voice  
May rightly answer that melodious noise ;  
As once we did, till disproportion'd sin  
Jarr'd against nature's chime, and with harsh din  
Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
To their great Lord, whose love their motion  
    sway'd  
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood  
In first obedience, and their state of good.  
O may we soon again renew that song,  
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long  
To his celestial consort us unite,  
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of  
    light.

*Diapason*, In organ music, the concord of the octave.  
*Consort*, Band.

## SONG

### *On May morning*

Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,  
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her  
The flow'ry May, who from her green lap throws  
The yellow cowslip, and the pale primrose.

Hail, bounteous May, that dost inspire  
Mirth and youth, and warm desire,  
Woods and groves, are of thy dressing,  
Hill and dale, doth boast thy blessing.  
Thus we salute thee with our early song,  
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

*Harbinger, Forerunner.*

## SONG

### *From Arcades*

O'ER the smooth enamell'd green,  
Where no print of step hath been.  
Follow me as I sing,  
And touch the warbled string.  
Under the shady roof  
Of branching elm star-proof.  
Follow me,  
I will bring you where she sits,  
Clad in splendour as befits  
Her deity.  
Such a rural Queen  
All Arcadia hath not seen.

*Arcades* was a mask (see *Comus*) performed at Harefield Hall, Middlesex.

## ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER

*who sickened in the time of his vacancy, being forbid to go to London, by reason of the Plague.*

HERE lies old Hobson ; Death hath broke his  
girt,

And here alas, hath laid him in the dirt ;  
Or else the ways being foul, twenty to one,  
He's here stuck in a slough, and overthrown.  
'Twas such a shifter, that if truth were known,  
Death was half glad when he had got him down ;  
For he had any time this ten years full,  
Dodg'd with him, betwixt Cambridge and the  
Bull.

And surely Death could never have prevail'd,  
Had not his weekly course of carriage fail'd ;  
But lately finding him so long at home,  
And thinking now his journey's end was come,  
And that he had ta'en up his latest inn,  
In the kind office of a chamberlin  
Show'd him his room where he must lodge that  
night,  
Pull'd off his boots, and took away the light :  
If any ask for him, it shall be said,  
Hobson has supp'd, and 's newly gone to bed.

*Hobson, Carrier between Cambridge and the Bull Inn, Bishops-gate, London, as well as farmer, innkeeper, and maltster. He also hired out horses, and he always made his customer take the horse which stood nearest to the stable door : hence the phrase Hobson's choice.*

## PSALM CXXXVI

LET us with a gladsome mind  
Praise the Lord, for he is kind :  
For his mercies aye endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze his name abroad,  
For of gods he is the God ;  
For his, etc.

O let us his praises tell,  
Who doth the wrathful tyrants quell.  
For his, etc.

That with his miracles doth make  
Amazed Heav'n and Earth to shake :  
For his, etc.

That by his wisdom did create  
The painted Heav'ns so full of state.  
For his, etc.

That did the solid Earth ordain  
To rise above the watry plain.  
For his, etc.

That by his all-commanding might  
Did fill the new-made world with light.  
For his, etc.

*Psalm cxxxvi.* Milton transposed many of the Psalms into metrical verse. These stanzas are selected from the best known of these not very successful attempts at versification.

## A Shorter Milton

And caus'd the golden-tressed sun,  
All the day long his course to run.  
For his, etc.

The horned moon to shine by night  
Amongst her spangled sisters bright.  
For his, etc.

All living creatures he doth feed,  
And with full hand supplies their need.  
For his, etc.

Let us therefore warble forth  
His mighty majesty and worth.  
For his, etc.

That his mansion hath on high  
Above the reach of mortal eye :  
For his mercies aye endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.

## L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,  
Of Cerberus, and blackest Midnight born,  
In Stygian cave forlorn  
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights  
unholy,  
Find out some uncouth cell,  
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous  
wings,  
And the night-raven sings ;  
There under ebon shades, and low-brow'd  
rocks,  
As ragged as thy locks,  
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.  
But come thou Goddess fair and free,  
In Heav'n yclep'd Euphrosyne,  
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,  
Whom lovely Venus at a birth  
With two sister Graces more,  
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore ;  
Or whether (as some sager sing)  
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,  
Zephyr with Aurora playing,  
As he met her once a Maying,

*Cerberus*, The three-headed dog who guarded the entrance to the Underworld.

*Stygian*, Infernal ; the Styx was one of the rivers of Hades.

*Cimmerian*. The Cimmerians were a fabulous people, who lived in perpetual darkness.

*Yclept*, Called.

*Euphrosyne*, One of the Three Graces ; she presided over festivities.

*Venus*, Goddess of beauty.

*Bacchus*, God of wine.

*Zephyr*, The gentle west wind.

*Aurora*, The dawn.



## A Shorter Milton

There on beds of violets blue,  
And fresh-blown roses washt in dew,  
Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,  
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.  
Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,  
Nods, and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,  
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek ;  
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,  
And laughter holding both his sides.  
Come, and trip it as ye go  
On the light fantastic toe,  
And in thy right hand lead with thee  
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty ;  
And if I give thee honour due,  
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,  
To live with her, and live with thee,  
In unreprieved pleasures free ;  
To hear the lark begin his flight,  
And singing startle the dull night,  
From his watch-tower in the skies,  
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;  
Then to come in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good morrow,  
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,  
Or the twisted eglantine.  
While the cock with lively din,  
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,  
And to the stack, or the barn door,  
Stoutly struts his dames before,  
Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn

*Hebe, Goddess of youth.*

## L'Allegro

Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring morn,  
From the side of some hoar hill,  
Through the high wood echoing shrill.  
Some time walking not unseen  
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,  
Right against the eastern gate,  
Where the great Sun begins his state,  
Rob'd in flames, and amber light,  
The clouds in thousand liveries dight.  
While the ploughman near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.  
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures  
Whilst the landscape round it measures ;  
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,  
Where the nibbling flocks do stray,  
Mountains on whose barren breast  
The lab'ring clouds do often rest :  
Meadows trim with daisies pied,  
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.  
Towers, and battlements it sees  
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,  
Where perhaps some Beauty lies,  
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.  
Hard by, a cottage-chimney smokes,  
From betwixt two aged oaks,  
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,  
Are at their savoury dinner set

*Cynosure*, The Dog's Tail, or, as we call it, the Little Bear, by which the Phœnician sailors steered their course.

*Corydon*, *Thyrsis*, *Phillis*, and *Thestylis*, Classical names of shepherds and shepherdesses.

## A Shorter Milton

Of herbs, and other country messes,  
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses ;  
And then in haste the bower she leaves,  
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves ;  
Or if the earlier season lead  
To the tann'd haycock in the mead,  
Sometimes with secure delight  
The upland hamlets will invite,  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks sound  
To many a youth, and many a maid,  
Dancing in the chequer'd shade ;  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sunshine holiday,  
Till the live-long daylight fail ;  
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,  
With stories told of many a feat,  
How fairy Mab the junkets eat ;  
She was pinch'd, and pull'd she said,  
And he by Friar's lanthorn led  
Tells how the drudging Goblin sweat,  
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end.  
Then lies him down the lubber fiend,  
And stretch'd out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
And crop-full out of doors he flings,  
Ere the first cock his matin rings.  
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,  
By whispering winds soon lull'd asleep.  
Tow'rd cities please us then,

*Rebeck*, Old-time fiddle, with four strings.

*Friar*, Friar Rush, a mythical figure who haunted houses.

## L'Allegro

And the busy hum of men,  
Where throngs of knights and barons bold  
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,  
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
Rain influence, and judge the prize  
Of wit, or arms, while both contend  
To win her grace, whom all commend.  
There let Hymen oft appear  
In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
With mask, and antique pageantry,  
Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream.  
Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
If Jonson's learned sock be on,  
Or sweetest Shakespear, fancy's child,  
Warble his native wood-notes wild.  
And ever against eating cares,  
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
Married to immortal verse  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce  
In notes, with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,  
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,  
The melting voice through mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony ;  
That Orpheus' self may heave his head  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heap'd Elysian flow'rs, and hear  
Such strains as would have won the ear

*Hymen*, God of marriage.

*Jonson*, The poet and playwright, Ben Jonson.

*Lydian*. Lydia was a country in Asia Minor. The ancients called the 'Lydian mode,' the scale of F with B natural instead of B flat ; it was used for tender airs.

## A Shorter Milton

Of Pluto, to have quite set free  
His half regain'd Eurydice,  
These delights if thou canst give,  
Mirth with thee, I mean to live.

*Pluto*, God of the Underworld, took Eurydice from her husband Orpheus, the mythical musician. Orpheus went down to the Underworld and so charmed Pluto with his music that he agreed to allow Eurydice to return to Earth, on condition that Orpheus did not look at her on the way. Before they reached the Earth, Orpheus looked round and Eurydice vanished.

## IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding joys,

The brood of folly without father bred,  
How little you bestead,

Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys ;  
Dwell in some idle brain,

And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,  
As thick and numberless

As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,  
Or likest hovering dreams

The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.

But hail thou Goddess, sage and holy,

Hail divinest Melancholy,

Whose saintly visage is too bright

To hit the sense of human sight ;

And therefore to our weaker view,

O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue ;

Black, but such as in esteem

Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,

Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove

To set her beauty's praise above

The Sea Nymphs, and their powers offended.

Yet thou art higher far descended ;

Thee bright-hair'd Vesta, long of yore,

To solitary Saturn bore ;

His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,

Such mixture was not held a stain).

*Bestead*, Help.

*Morpheus*, Son of Sleep and god of dreams.

*Memnon*, King of the Ethiopians, who went to help the Trojans, but was slain by Achilles. His sister was named Hemera.

*Ethiop queen*, Cassiopea, mother of Andromeda, whom she exposed to a sea monster to appease the Sea nymphs. Mother and daughter were placed among the stars.

*Vesta*, Goddess of the hearth, daughter of Saturn and Rhea.

## A Shorter Milton

Oft in glimmering bow'rs, and glades  
He met her, and in secret shades  
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,  
While yet there was no fear of Jove.  
Come pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestic train,  
And sable stole of cyprus lawn,  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
With ev'n step, and musing gait,  
And looks commercing with the skies,  
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes :  
There held in holy passion still,  
Forget thyself to marble, till  
With a sad leaden downward cast,  
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.  
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,  
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,  
And hears the Muses in a ring,  
Aye round about Jove's altar sing.  
And add to these retired Leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure ;  
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,  
The Cherub Contemplation,  
And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less Philomel will deign a song,  
In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,

*Ida*, A mountain in Crete, where Jupiter (Jove) was brought up.  
*Stole*, Veil, hood. *Cyprus*, A fine linen.  
*Decent*, Comely, beautiful. *Philomel*, The nightingale.

## Il Penseroso

While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,  
Gently o'er th'accustom'd oak ;  
Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musical, most melancholy !  
Thee chauntress oft the woods among,  
I woo to hear thy even-song ;  
And missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth-shaven green,  
To behold the wand'ring Moon,  
Riding near her highest noon,  
Like one that had been led astray  
Through the Heav'n's wide pathless way ;  
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
Oft on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off curfew sound,  
Over some wide-water'd shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar ;  
Or if the air will not permit,  
Some still removed place will fit,  
Where glowing embers through the room  
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,  
Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the cricket on the hearth,  
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,  
To bless the doors from nightly harm :  
Or let my lamp at midnight hour  
Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,  
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,  
With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere

*Cynthia*, Diana, goddess of the moon.

*Removed*, Remote.

*Out-watch the Bear*. The constellation of the Great Bear **never** sets, so that it could only be out-watched by waiting for dawn.

*Thrice-great Hermes*, A fabled king of Egypt, famous for his learning.

*Unsphere*, Bring down from his high station.



## A Shorter Milton

The spirit of Plato to unfold  
What worlds, or what vast regions hold  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook :  
And of those Demons that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With planet, or with element.  
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy  
In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,  
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,  
Or the tale of Troy divine.  
Or what (though rare) of later age,  
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.  
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power  
Might raise Musæus from his bower,  
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing  
Such notes as warbled to the string,  
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,  
And made Hell grant what love did seek.  
Or call up him that left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,  
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
And who had Canace to wife,  
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,  
And of the wondrous horse of brass,

*Pall*, The mantle worn by Roman actors in tragedy.

*Thebes*, City of Greece, the scene of several of the most famous Greek tragic plays, including the *Seven against Thebes* of Æschylus.

*Pelops' line*. Agamemnon was descended from Pelops and was the subject of one of the greatest of Greek tragedies by Æschylus.

*Of later age*, An allusion to Shakespeare.

*Buskin'd*. Greek tragic actors wore heavy boots, or buskins.

*Musæus*, A mythical Greek poet, said by some legends to be the son of Orpheus.

*Pluto*. See note on page 38.

*Cambuscan bold*. This refers to Chaucer's 'Squire's Tale.'

## Il Penseroso

On which the Tartar king did ride ;  
And if aught else, great bards beside,  
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
Of tourneys and of trophies hung ;  
Of forests, and enchantments drear,  
Where more is meant than meets the ear.  
Thus Night oft see me in thy pale career,  
Till civil-suited Morn appear,  
Not trick'd and frounc'd as she was wont,  
With the Attic boy to hunt,  
But kerchief'd in a comely cloud,  
While rocking winds are piping loud,  
Or usher'd with a shower still,  
When the gust hath blown his fill,  
Ending on the rustling leaves,  
With minute drops from off the eaves.  
And when the sun begins to fling  
His flaring beams, me Goddess bring  
To arched walks of twilight groves,  
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves  
Of pine, or monumental oak,  
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,  
Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,  
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.  
There in close covert by some brook,  
Where no profaner eye may look,  
Hide me from day's garish eye,  
While the bee with honied thigh,  
That at her flow'ry work doth sing,  
And the waters murmuring  
With such consort as they keep,

*And if aught else. . . .* This and the following lines refer to the works of Edmund Spenser.

*Trick'd*, Adorned.

*Frounc'd*, With her hair decked.

*The Attic boy*, Cephalus, beloved by Eos, the dawn.

*Still*, Gentle.

*Day's garish eye*, The sun.

## A Shorter Milton

Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep ;  
And let some strange mysterious dream,  
Wave at his wings in airy stream,  
Of lively portraiture display'd,  
Softly on my eyelids laid.  
And as I wake, sweet music breathe  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
Or th'unseen Genius of the wood.  
But let my due feet never fail,  
To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
And love the high embowed roof,  
With antic pillars massy proof,  
And storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light.  
There let the pealing organ blow,  
To the full voic'd quire below,  
In service high, and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.  
And may at last my weary age  
Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
Where I may sit and rightly spell  
Of every star that Heav'n doth show,  
And every herb that sips the dew ;  
Till old experience do attain  
To something like prophetic strain.  
These pleasures Melancholy give,  
And I with thee will choose to live.

*Pale*, Enclosure.

*Massy proof*, Able to bear the weight placed upon them.

## LYCIDAS

*In this Monody the author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish seas, 1637. And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height.*

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forc'd fingers rude,  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.  
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,  
Compels me to disturb your season due :  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer :  
Who would not sing for Lycidas ? he knew  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme  
He must not float upon his wat'ry bier  
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
Without the meed of some melodious tear.  
Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,  
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,  
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.  
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,  
So may some gentle Muse  
With lucky words favour my destin'd urn,  
And as he passes turn,  
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.

*A learned friend.* This was Edward King, son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland under Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I. On his voyage to Ireland his ship struck on a rock on the English coast, and he perished in the sea. He was distinguished for his piety and talents, was a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and was contemporary with Milton at the University.

*Sere, Dry, withered.*

*Sisters of the sacred well, The Muses.*

## A Shorter Milton

For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,  
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill.

Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd  
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,  
We drove afield, and both together heard  
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft till the star that rose, at ev'ning, bright  
Toward Heav'n's descent had slop'd his westering  
wheel.

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Temper'd to th'oaten flute;  
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with clov'n heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent long,  
And old Damoetas lov'd to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
Now thou art gone, and never must return !  
Thee Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,  
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,  
And all their echoes mourn.

The willows, and the hazel copses green,  
Shall now no more be seen,  
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.  
As killing as the canker to the rose,  
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe  
wear,

When first the white-thorn blows ;  
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

*The self-same hill.* Both Milton and King were educated at Cambridge.

*Fed the same flock,* Studied together.

*Sultry horn,* The hum of the gray-fly in the noonday heat.

*Batt'ning,* Feeding.

*Satyrs and Fauns,* Woodland deities.

*Damoetas,* A reference to some tutor at Cambridge ; *Damoetas* was actually a shepherd mentioned by Virgil.

*Gadding,* Creeping, straying.

*Canker,* The canker-worm.

## Lycidas

Where were ye Nymphs when the remorseless  
    deep  
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas ?  
For neither were ye playing on the steep,  
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids lie,  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream :  
Ay me, I fondly dream !  
Had ye been there—for what could that have  
    done ?

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son  
Whom universal nature did lament,  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore ?

Alas ! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse ?  
Were it not better done as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair ?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,

*Mona*, The isle of Anglesey, the centre of the Druids or priests of Ancient Britain. Possibly *the steep* is Penmaenmawr, the headland of the coast opposite Anglesey. *Deva* is the river Dee.

*The Muse herself*. Calliope, chief of the nine Muses, was the mother of Orpheus.

*Rout*. Orpheus, in his grief for the loss of Euridice, treated all the women of his native Thrace with contempt ; they in revenge, during the Bacchanalian orgies, tore him to pieces and threw his head into the river Hebrus.

*Amaryllis*, The name of a shepherdess in Virgil's works ; *Neæra*, a girl's name in Horace's poems.

*Clear*, Noble.

*Guerdon*, Reward.

## A Shorter Milton

And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,  
And slits the thin spun life. 'But not the  
praise,'

Phœbus repli'd, and touch'd my trembling ears ;  
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil

Set off to th'world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed.'

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,  
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal  
reeds,

That strain I heard was of higher mood :

But now my oat proceeds,

And listens to the herald of the sea

That came in Neptune's plea ;

He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,

What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain ?

And question'd every gust of rugged winds

That blows from off each beaked promontory :

They knew not of his story,

And sage Hippotades their answer brings,

That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd.

The air was calm, and on the level brine

*Fury.* Milton thus speaks of Atropos, one of the three Fates. She cut the thread of life which was spun by one of her sisters.

*Phœbus*, Apollo, the sun god.

*Arethuse* was a fountain in the island of Ortygia, near Syracuse. The reference here is to the Sicilian poet Theocritus.

*Mincius*, A river near the birthplace of Virgil, a village near Mantua.

*In Neptune's plea*, To hold inquiry for Neptune, god of the sea.

*Hippotades*, Eolus, son of Hippotes, who ruled the winds, which he kept shut up in a cavern.

## Lycidas

Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.  
It was that fatal and perfidious bark  
Built in th'eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,  
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,  
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge  
Like to that sanguine flow'r inscrib'd with woe.  
' Ah ; who hath reft ' (quoth he) ' my dearest  
pledge ? '

Last came, and last did go,  
The pilot of the Galilean lake,  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain,  
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain)  
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake,  
' How well could I have spar'd for thee, young  
swain,

Anow of such as for their bellies' sake,  
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold ?  
Of other care they little reck'ning make,  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.  
Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how  
to hold

A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least  
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs !

*Panope with all her sisters*, The Nereids, the fifty daughters of Nereus and Doris, the sea-nymphs of the Mediterranean.

*Camus*, The river Cam, on which Cambridge is situated.

*Sanguine flow'r*, The hyacinth, which was supposed to have sprung from the blood of Hyacinthus, a Spartan youth accidentally killed by Apollo. On its petals were said to be inscribed the letters ' AI AI,' a Greek cry of woe, hence ' inscrib'd with woe.'

*Pilot of the Galilean lake*, St Peter, who had the keys of heaven and hell ; he was ' mitr'd ' because he was Bishop of Rome.

*Spar'd for thee*. St. Peter would rather have seen some of the less zealous clergy perish than Edward King. The clergy are here likened to shepherds, their congregations to sheep.



## A Shorter Milton

What reck's it them ? What need they ? They  
are sped ;

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw ;  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they  
draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread :  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing said,  
But that two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.'

Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past,  
That shrunk thy streams ; return Sicilian Muse,  
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
Their bells, and flowrets of a thousand hues.  
Ye valleys low where the mild whispers use,  
Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks,  
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,  
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,  
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
The white pink, and the pansy freakt with jet,  
The glowing violet,

*Are sped*, Are provided for.

*Scrannel*, Meagre, thin.

*Grim wolf*, The Roman Church ; possibly also a learned reference to the wolf which nursed Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome.

*Two-handed engine*, Perhaps the weapon of Christ's anger, two-handed because it requires both hands to wield it. Many explanations of this passage have been given.

*Alpheus*, A river of the Peloponnese in Greece, which disappears underground and was supposed to reappear in Sicily mingled with the waters of the spring Arethusa.

*Swart-star*, Either the star that makes plants black by its heat, or simply the injurious star.

*Rathe*, Early.

## Lycidas

The musk-rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine,  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears :  
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
For so to interpose a little ease,  
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.  
Ay me ! Whilst thee the shores, and sounding  
seas

Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,  
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;  
Or whether thou to our moist vows deny'd,  
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,  
Where the great vision of the guarded mount  
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold ;  
Look homeward Angel now, and melt with ruth ;  
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woful Shepherds weep no more,  
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,  
Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor  
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
And tricks his beams, and with new spangled  
ore,  
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :  
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
Through the dear might of him that walk'd the  
waves,

*Monstrous world*, World of monsters.

*Bellerus*, A name coined by Milton.

*Mount*, St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall, on which Milton imagines the archangel actually seated, looking towards Namancos and Bayona in north-western Spain.

## A Shorter Milton

Where other groves, and other streams along,  
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,  
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
There entertain him all the saints above,  
In solemn troops, and sweet societies  
That sing, and singing in their glory move,  
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.  
Now Lycidas the shepherds weep no more ;  
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,  
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to th'oaks and  
rills,  
While the still morn went out with sandals gray,  
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,  
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay :  
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,  
And now was dropt into the western bay ;  
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue :  
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

*Stops*, The holes of a flute.

*Doric lay*. Theocritus and Moschus, two Dorian Greek poets of Syracuse, wrote of the deaths of Daphnis and Bion ; and Milton had this in mind in writing *Lycidas*.

## SONNETS

### I

*On his being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three*

How soon hath Time the subtle thief of youth,  
Stol'n on his wing my three and twenti'th year !  
My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.  
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,  
That I to manhood am arriv'd so near,  
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.  
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
It shall be still in strictest measure ev'n,  
To that same lot, however mean, or high,  
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of  
Heav'n ;  
All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
As ever in my great task Master's eye.

### 2

*When the Assault was Intended to the City*

CAPTAIN or Colonel, or Knight in arms,  
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may  
seize,  
If ever deed of honour did thee please,

*Assault.* After the battle of Edge Hill, 1642, the Royalist troops advanced as far as Brentford ; but Parliamentary reinforcements prevented them from advancing farther. It has been suggested that if London had really been in danger of capture by the enemy, Milton would have taken more practical steps for his safety than writing this sonnet.

## A Shorter Milton

Guard them, and him within protect from  
    harms,  
He can requite thee, for he knows the charms  
    That call fame on such gentle acts as these,  
    And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,  
    Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.  
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower,  
    The great Emathian conqueror bid spare  
    The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower  
Went to the ground : and the repeated air  
    Of sad Electra's poet had the power  
    To save th'Athenian walls from ruin bare.

### 3

*On the Detraction which followed upon my  
writing certain Treatises*

A BOOK was writ of late call'd Tetrachordon ;  
    And wov'n close, both matter, form and style ;  
    The subject new : it walk'd the town a while,  
    Numb'ring good intellects ; now seldom por'd  
        on.  
Cries the stall-reader, ' Bless us ! what a word on  
    A title-page is this ! ' and some in file  
    Stand spelling false, while one might walk to  
    Mile-  
    End green. Why is it harder Sirs, than  
    Gordon,

*Emathian conqueror*, Alexander the Great. Emathia was another name for Macedon. When he took and destroyed Thebes, he left standing the house of the poet Pindar.

*Sad Electra's poet*, Euripides. When Athens was conquered, verses from the *Electra* of Euripides recited by a minstrel so wrought upon the conquerors that they spared the city from destruction.

*Tetrachordon*, One of Milton's tracts on divorce.

## Sonnets

Colkitto, or Macdonnel, or Galasp ?

Those rugged names to our like mouths grow  
sleek

That would have made Quintilian stare and  
gasp.

Thy age, like ours, O Soul of Sir John Cheke,  
Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,  
When thou taught'st Cambridge, and king  
Edward Greek.

### 4

*To the Lord General Fairfax at the Siege of  
Colchester*

FAIRFAX, whose name in arms through Europe  
rings

Filling each mouth with envy, or with praise,  
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,  
And rumours loud, that daunt remotest kings,

Thy firm unshak'n virtue ever brings

Victory home, though new rebellions raise  
Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays  
Her brok'n league, to imp their serpent wings.

O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand ;

For what can war, but endless war still breed ?  
Till truth, and right from violence be freed,

*Colkitto, etc.* Scottish names, which Milton uses to ridicule  
writers of theological subjects.

*Quintilian*, A Roman writer on rhetoric, who lived in the first  
century, A.D. *Sir John Cheke*, Tutor of King Edward VI.

*Hydra*, a fabulous water-serpent killed by Hercules. It had  
seven heads, and as fast as one was cut off two sprang up in its  
place.

*False North*. The Scots invaded England in 1648, in support of  
the King, but were defeated by Cromwell in a three days' battle  
between Preston and Warrington, referred to as 'Darwen stream' in  
the next sonnet. *Imp*, To cure the broken wing (of a hawk).

## A Shorter Milton

And public faith clear'd from the shameful brand  
Of public fraud. In vain doth valour bleed,  
While avarice, and rapine share the land.

### 5

#### *To the Lord General Cromwell*

CROMWELL, our chief of men, who through a  
cloud  
Not of war only, but detractions rude,  
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude  
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast  
plough'd,  
And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud  
Hast rear'd God's trophies, and his work  
pursu'd,  
While Darwen stream with blood of Scots  
imbru'd,  
And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,  
And Worcester's laureat wreath; yet much  
remains  
To conquer still; peace hath her victories  
No less renown'd than war: new foes arise,  
Threat'ning to bind our souls with secular chains:  
Help us to save free conscience from the paw  
Of hireling wolves whose gospel is their maw.

### 6

#### *To Sir Henry Vane the Younger*

VANE, young in years, but in sage counsel old,  
Than whom a better senator ne'er held

## Sonnets

The helm of Rome, when gowns not arms  
repell'd  
The fierce Epirot and the African bold,  
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold  
The drift of hollow states, hard to be spell'd,  
Then to advise how war may best, upheld,  
Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold  
In all her equipage; besides to know  
Both spiritual power and civil, what each  
means,  
What severs each, thou hast learn'd, which  
few have done.  
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe:  
Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans  
In peace, and reck'ns thee her eldest son.

## 7

### *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont*

AVENGE O Lord thy slaughter'd saints, whose  
bones  
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old  
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and  
stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans

*Fierce Epirot*, Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, who invaded Italy and defeated the Romans.

*African bold*, Hannibal, the Carthaginian, who spent almost his whole life in war against the Romans.

*Slaughter'd saints*. The Duke of Savoy gave to his Protestant subjects in the Vaudois the alternative of attending Mass or leaving the country. His troops enforced the edict with fire and sword. All England was indignant, and a large sum was collected for the sufferers. Cromwell successfully protested to the Duke and to Louis XIV. of France.



## A Shorter Milton

Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that roll'd  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their  
moans  
The vales redoubl'd to the hills, and they  
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes  
sow  
O'er all th'Italian fields where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant ; that from these may grow  
A hundred fold, who having learn'd thy way  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

### 8

#### *On his Blindness*

WHEN I consider how my light is spent,  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide,  
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more  
bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest he returning chide ;  
' Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd ? '  
I fondly ask ; but patience to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, ' God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts ; who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best ; his  
state  
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest :  
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

*Babylonian woe.* The Puritans commonly referred to Rome as Babylon, and to the Pope as the Babylonian high-priest.

*One talent.* See St. Matthew xxv. 14-30.

## Sonnets

### 9

#### *To Mr. Lawrence*

LAWRENCE of virtuous father virtuous son,  
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,  
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the  
fire  
Help waste a sullen day ; what may be won  
From the hard season gaining ? time will run  
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire  
The frozen earth ; and clothe in fresh attire  
The lily and rose, that neither sow'd nor spun.  
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,  
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise  
To hear the lute well touch'd, or artful voice  
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air ?  
He who of those delights can judge, and spare  
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

### 10

#### *To Cyriac Skinner*

CYRIAC, whose grandsire on the royal bench  
Of British Themis, with no mean applause  
Pronounc'd and in his volumes taught our  
laws,  
Which others at their bar so often wrench :

*Lawrence* was the son of Henry Lawrence, president of Cromwell's Council and Member for Herefordshire in the Little Parliament, 1653.

*Favonius*, The name of the west wind, the wind of springtime.

*Cyriac Skinner's* mother was daughter of Sir Edward Coke, Chief Justice of England.

*Themis*, The goddess of justice.

## A Shorter Milton

To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench  
In mirth, that after no repenting draws ;  
Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause,  
And what the Swede intend, and what the  
French.

To measure life, learn thou betimes, and know  
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way ;  
For other things mild Heav'n a time ordains,  
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,  
That with superfluous burden loads the day,  
And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

### II

#### *On his Deceased Wife*

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused saint  
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,  
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband  
gave,  
Rescu'd from death by force though pale and  
faint.  
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed  
taint,

*Euclid*, The celebrated mathematician of Alexandria, who lived 323-283 B.C.

*Archimedes*, The greatest of all the mathematicians of the ancient world, who was born at Syracuse in 287 B.C.

*Swede*, Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, who invaded Germany to help the Protestants in the Thirty Years' War, about the time when this sonnet was written.

*Alcestis* was the wife of Admetus, king of Pheræ, in Thessaly. She offered to die in place of her husband, since the god Apollo had prevailed on the Fates to allow Admetus to live if another would die in his place. When Death came to fetch Alcestis, Hercules (*Jove's great son*) wrestled with him, overthrew him, and brought Alcestis back to her husband.

## Sonnets

Purification in the old law did save,  
And such, as yet once more I trust to have  
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,  
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind :  
Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight,  
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd  
So clear, as in no face with more delight.  
But O as to embrace me she inclin'd  
I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my  
night.

### 12

#### *On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament*

BECAUSE you have thrown off your prelate lord,  
And with stiff vows renounc'd his liturgy  
To seize the widow'd whore Plurality  
From them whose sin ye envi'd, not abhorr'd,  
Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword  
To force our consciences that Christ set free,  
And ride us with a classic hierarchy  
Taught ye by mere A. S. and Rotherford ?  
Men whose life, learning, faith and pure intent  
Would have been held in high esteem with  
Paul

*Prelate lord*, The Archbishop.

*Plurality*, The holding of more than one church living. This was a common Puritan complaint against the Anglican clergy ; but Milton here brings the same charge against the Presbyterians.

*Classic hierarchy*. Under the Presbyterian system the country was divided into provinces, which were divided into classes, and these in turn were divided into parishes.

A. S., Adam Stewart, writer of a tract against the Independents, the sect to which Cromwell belonged.

*Rotherford* wrote a treatise 'Against pretended liberty of conscience.'

## A Shorter Milton

Must now be nam'd and printed heretics  
By shallow Edwards and Scotch what d'ye call :  
But we do hope to find out all your tricks,  
Your plots and packing worse than those of  
Trent,

That so the Parliament  
May, with their wholesome and preventive shears  
Clip your phylacteries, though bauk your ears,  
And succour our just fears  
When they shall read this clearly in your charge,  
New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large.

*Edwards* was the author of 'Reason against Independence and Toleration.'

*Trent.* The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was a council of the Roman Church, which promulgated a number of reforms.

*Phylacteries* were slips of parchment, with passages from the Law written on them, worn by the Pharisees on their foreheads.

*Bauk,* Stop short at.

*Writ large.* Both 'presbyter' and 'priest' are derived from the Greek word 'presbyteros,' meaning 'elder,' so that the former is only a less contracted form of the latter.

## COMUS, A MASK

*Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634*

### The Persons

The Attendant Spirit, afterwards in the habit of  
*Thyrsis*.

*Comus* with his crew.

The Lady.

First Brother.

Second Brother.

*Sabrina* the Nymph.

*The chief persons which presented, were*

The Lord *Brackley*.

Mr. *Thomas Egerton* his brother.

The Lady *Alice Egerton*.

The First Scene discovers a wild wood.

*The Attendant Spirit descends or enters.*

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court  
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes  
Of bright ærial spirits live inspher'd  
In regions mild of calm and serene air,  
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,  
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted  
care  
Confin'd, and pester'd in this pinfold here,

*Pester'd*, Crowded, confined.  
*Pinfold*, A fold for strayed cattle.

## A Shorter Milton

Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,  
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives  
After this mortal change, to her true servants  
Amongst the enthron'd Gods on sainted seats.  
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire  
To lay their just hands on that golden key  
That opes the palace of eternity :  
To such my errand is, and but for such,  
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds,  
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.

But to my task. Neptune besides the sway  
Of every salt flood, and each ebbing stream,  
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove,  
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles  
That like to rich and various gems inlay  
The unadorned bosom of the deep ;  
Which he to grace his tributary Gods  
By course commits to several government,  
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire  
crowns,

And wield their little tridents ; but this Isle,  
The greatest and the best of all the main,  
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities ;  
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun  
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power  
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide  
An old and haughty nation proud in arms :  
Where his fair offspring nurs'd in princely lore,  
Are coming to attend their father's state,  
And new-entrusted sceptre ; but their way

*Change*, A figure in a dance.

*Ambrosial*, Heavenly ; ambrosia was the food of the gods.

*High and nether Jove*. The three sons of Saturn shared the rule of the universe between them : Jupiter (' high Jove ') took heaven and the upper world, Pluto (' nether Jove ') the underworld, and Neptune the sea.

*Mickle*, Great.

## A Mask

Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear  
wood,

The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring passenger.  
And here their tender age might suffer peril,  
But that by quick command from sovereign  
Jove

I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard ;  
And listen why, for I will tell ye now  
What never yet was heard in tale or song  
From old or modern bard, in hall or bow'r.

Bacchus that first from out the purple grape,  
Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,  
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd  
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,  
On Circe's island fell (who knows not Circe,  
The daughter of the sun ? whose charmed cup  
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,  
And downward fell into a grovelling swine).  
This Nymph that gaz'd upon his clust'ring locks,  
With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,  
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son  
Much like his father, but his mother more,  
Whom therefore she brought up and Comus  
nam'd.

Who ripe, and frolic of his full grown age,  
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,  
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,  
And in thick shelter of black shades imbower'd,

*Bacchus* was the wine god, son of Jupiter and Semele. He taught men the cultivation of the vine to make wine. There is a story that he was carried off by mariners, who were turned into dolphins.

*Circe*, Daughter of Helios, the sun, was famous for her magical arts. She lived on the island of *Æaea*, where Ulysses was cast during his voyage home from Troy.

*Celtic and Iberian fields*, France and Spain.



## A Shorter Milton

Excels his mother at her mighty art,  
Off'ring to every weary traveller  
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,  
To quench the drouth of Phœbus, which as they  
taste  
(For most do taste through fond intemperate  
thirst)  
Soon as the potion works, their human  
count'nance,  
Th'express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd  
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,  
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,  
All other parts remaining as they were ;  
And they, so perfect is their misery,  
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
But boast themselves more comely than before  
And all their friends and native home forget,  
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.  
Therefore when any favour'd of high Jove,  
Chances to pass through this advent'rous glade,  
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star,  
I shoot from Heav'n, to give him safe convoy,  
As now I do : but first I must put off  
These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,  
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain,  
That to the service of this house belongs,  
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song,  
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,  
And hush the waving woods, nor of less faith,  
And in this office of his mountain watch,  
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid  
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread  
Of hateful steps, I must be viewless now.

*Ounce*, Leopard.

*Advent'rous*, Full of adventures.  
*Viewless*, Invisible.

## A Mask

*Comus enters with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other ; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering ; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Com. The star that bids the shepherd fold,  
Now the top of Heav'n doth hold ;  
And the gilded car of day  
His glowing axle doth allay  
In the steep Atlantic stream ;  
And the slope sun his upward beam  
Shoots against the dusky pole,  
Pacing toward the other goal  
Of his chamber in the east.  
Meanwhile welcome Joy, and Feast,  
Midnight Shout and Revelry,  
Tipsy Dance and Jollity.  
Braid your locks with rosy twine,  
Dropping odours, dropping wine.  
Rigour now is gone to bed,  
And Advice with scrupulous head,  
Strict Age, and sour Severity,  
With their grave saws in slumber lie.  
We that are of purer fire  
Imitate the starry quire,  
Who in their nightly watchful spheres  
Lead in swift round the months and years.  
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove  
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move ;  
And on the tawny sands and shelves  
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves ;

*Steep, The deep, the high sea.*

*Starry quire, Refers to the music of the spheres. See note on page 20.*

*Pert, Sprightly, lively.*

## A Shorter Milton

By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,  
The wood-nymphs deck'd with daisies trim,  
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep :  
What hath night to do with sleep ?  
Night hath better sweets to prove,  
Venus now wakes, and wak'ns Love.  
Come let us our rites begin,  
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,  
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.  
Hail Goddess of nocturnal sport  
Dark-veil'd Cotytto, t'whom the secret flame  
Of midnight torches burns ; mysterious dame  
That ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon womb  
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,  
And makes one blot of all the air,  
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,  
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend  
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end  
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,  
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,  
The nice morn on th'Indian steep  
From her cabin'd loophole peep,  
And to the tell-tale sun descry  
Our conceal'd solemnity.  
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground,  
In a light fantastic round.

### *The Measure*

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace,  
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.

*Cotytto*, A Thracian goddess, whose festival was held at night, and included all kinds of licentious rites.

*Stygian*, Belonging to the Underworld.

*Hecate*, Goddess of enchantments.

*Spets*, Spits.

*Round*, A dance.

## A Mask

Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and  
trees,

Our number may affright : some virgin sure  
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)  
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,  
And to my wily trains ; I shall ere long  
Be well-stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd  
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl  
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,  
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,  
And give it false presentments, lest the place  
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,  
And put the damsel to suspicious flight,  
Which must not be, for that's against my course ;  
I under fair pretence of friendly ends,  
And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy  
Baited with reasons not unpalatable,  
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,  
And hug him into snares. When once her eye  
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,  
I shall appear some harmless villager  
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.  
But here she comes, I fairly step aside,  
And hearken, if I may, her business here

*The Lady enters.*

*Lad.* This way the noise was, if mine ear be  
true,  
My best guide now ; methought it was the sound  
Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment,  
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe  
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,  
When for their teeming flocks, and granges full,

*Shrouds, Hiding-places.*

*Glozing, Deceitful, flattering.  
Gear, Business.*

## A Shorter Milton

In wanton dance, they praise the bounteous Pan,  
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath  
To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence  
Of such late wassailers ; yet, O where else  
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet  
In the blind mazes of this tangl'd wood ?  
My brothers when they saw me wearied out  
With this long way, resolving here to lodge  
Under the spreading favour of these pines,  
Stepp'd, as they said, to the next thicket side  
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit  
As the kind hospitable woods provide.  
They left me then, when the gray-hooded Ev'n  
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed  
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.  
But where they are, and why they came not back,  
Is now the labour of my thoughts ; 'tis likeliest  
They had engag'd their wand'ring steps too far,  
And envious darkness, ere they could return,  
Had stole them from me ; else O thievish Night,  
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,  
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,  
That nature hung in Heav'n, and fill'd their lamps  
With everlasting oil, to give due light  
To the misled and lonely traveller ?  
This is the place, as well as I may guess,  
Whence ev'n now the tumult of loud mirth  
Was rife, and perfect in my list'ning ear,  
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.  
What might this be ? A thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into my memory,

*Wassailers*, Revellers.

*Votarist*, One who had vowed to be a pilgrim.

*Palmer's weed*, Pilgrim's dress.

*Phœbus' wain*, The chariot of Phœbus Apollo, the sun god.

*Single darkness*, Darkness alone.

## A Mask

Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,  
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names  
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.  
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound  
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended  
By a strong-siding champion Conscience.—  
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,  
Thou hovering Angel girt with golden wings,  
And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity,  
I see ye visibly, and now believe  
That he, the Supreme good, t' whom all things ill  
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,  
Would send a glist'ring guardian if need were,  
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.  
Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night ?  
I did not err, there does a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.  
I cannot halloo to my Brothers, but  
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest  
I'll venture, for my new enliven'd spirits  
Prompt me ; and they perhaps are not far off.

## Song

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph that liv'st un-  
seen  
Within thy airy shell,  
By slow Meander's margent green,  
And in the violet-embroider'd vale  
Where the love-lorn nightingale  
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well :

*Meander*, A river, proverbial for its winding course, which flows into the Ægean Sea near Miletus.

## A Shorter Milton

Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair  
That likest thy Narcissus are ?  
O if thou have  
Hid them in some flow'ry cave,  
Tell me but where  
Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere,  
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,  
And give resounding grace to all Heav'n's harmonies.

*Enter Comus.*

*Com.* Can any mortal mixture of earth's  
mould  
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment ?  
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
To testify his hidd'n residence ;  
How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night  
At every fall smoothing the raven down  
Of darkness till it smil'd : I have oft heard  
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,  
Amidst the flowery-kirtl'd Naiades,  
Culling their potent herbs, and baleful drugs,  
Who as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,  
And lap it in Elysium ; Scylla wept,

*Daughter of the sphere.* Echo is here supposed to have its origin from the reverberation of the music of the spheres (see note on page 20).

*Sirens,* Three sea-nymphs who lived on an island off south-west Italy ; by their singing they enticed mariners to their destruction on dangerous rocks.

*Kirtl'd.* A kirtle was a woman's garment.

*Naiades,* Water nymphs.

*Elysium,* The abode of the blessed in the Underworld.

*Scylla* and *Charybdis,* Two monsters, who lived opposite one another on rocks between Italy and Sicily. Mariners who tried to escape the one fell into the clutches of the other.

## A Mask

And chid her barking waves into attention,  
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause :  
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,  
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself ;  
But such a sacred, and home-felt delight,  
Such sober certainty of waking bliss  
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,  
And she shall be my queen. Hail foreign wonder,  
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed  
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine  
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Silvan, by blest song  
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog  
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.

*Lad.* Nay gentle Shepherd, ill is lost that  
praise  
That is address'd to unattending ears,  
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift  
How to regain my sever'd company,  
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo  
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

*Com.* What chance good Lady, hath bereft you  
thus ?

*Lad.* Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.

*Com.* Could that divide you from near-ushering  
guides ?

*Lad.* They left me weary on a grassy turf.

*Com.* By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why ?

*Lad.* To seek i' th' valley some cool friendly  
spring.

*Com.* And left your fair side all unguarded  
Lady ?

*Lad.* They were but twain, and purpos'd quick  
return.

*Com.* Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

*Lad.* How easy my misfortune is to hit !



## A Shorter Milton

*Com.* Imports their loss, beside the present  
need ?

*Lad.* No less than if I should my brothers lose.

*Com.* Were they of manly prime, or youthful  
bloom ?

*Lad.* As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

*Com.* Two such I saw, what time the labour'd  
ox

In his loose traces from the furrow came,  
And the swink'd hedger at his supper sate ;  
I saw them under a green mantling vine  
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,  
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots,  
Their port was more than human, as they stood ;  
I took it for a faery vision  
Of some gay creatures of the element  
That in the colours of the rainbow live  
And play i' th' plighted clouds. I was awe-  
struck,  
And as I pass'd, I worshipp'd ; if those you seek  
It were a journey like the path to Heav'n,  
To help you find them.

*Lad.* Gentle Villager.

What readiest way would bring me to that place ?

*Com.* Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

*Lad.* To find that out, good Shepherd, I  
suppose,

In such a scant allowance of star-light,  
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,  
Without the sure guess of well-practis'd feet.

*Com.* I know each lane, and every alley green,  
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,

*Hebe*, Goddess of youth, cupbearer of the gods.

*Swink'd*, Weary with toil.

*Element*, Sky.

*Port*, Bearing, appearance.

*Plighted*, Folded.

## A Mask

And every bosky bourn from side to side,  
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood :  
And if your stray-attendants be yet lodg'd  
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know  
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark  
From her thatch'd pallet rouse ; if otherwise  
I can conduct you Lady to a low  
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe  
Till further quest.

*Lad.* Shepherd I take thy word,  
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,  
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds  
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls  
And courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,  
And yet is most pretended : in a place  
Less warranted than this, or less secure,  
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.  
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial  
To my proportion'd strength. Shepherd lead  
on——

*Enter the two Brothers.*

*Eld. Bro.* Unmuffle ye faint stars, and thou  
fair moon,  
That wont'st to love the traveller's benizon,  
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,  
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here  
In double night of darkness and of shades ;  
Or if your influence be quite damm'd up  
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper  
Though a rush candle, from the wicker-hole  
Of some clay habitation, visit us  
With thy long-levell'd rule of streaming light,

*Bosky, Shaded by bushes.*

*Disinherit, Dispossess*

## A Shorter Milton

And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,  
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

2 *Bro.*

Or if our eyes

Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear  
The folded flocks, penn'd in their wattled cotes,  
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,  
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock  
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,  
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering  
In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.  
But O that hapless virgin our lost sister,  
Where may she wander now, whither betake her  
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and  
          thistles ?

Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,  
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm  
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.  
What if in wild amazement, and affright,  
Or while we speak, within the direful grasp  
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat ?

*Eld. Bro.* Peace Brother, be not over-exquisite  
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils ;  
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,  
What need a man forestall his date of grief,  
And run to meet what he would most avoid ?  
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,  
How bitter is such self-delusion ?  
My sister is not so defenceless left,  
As you imagine ; she has a hidden strength  
Which you remember not.

*Star of Arcady.* Callisto, daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia (Arcady), was changed by Jupiter into the constellation of the Great Bear, her son Arcas into the Lesser Bear (also called Cynosura or the Dog's Tail).

*Tyrian,* Because mariners from Tyre steered by it.

*Exquisite,* Curious, inquisitive.

## A Mask

2 *Bro.*                      What hidden strength,  
Unless the strength of Heav'n, if you mean  
   that?

*Eld. Bro.* I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,  
Which if Heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own :

'Tis chastity, my Brother, chastity :  
She that has that, is clad in complete steel,  
And like a quiver'd Nymph with arrows keen  
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,  
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,  
Where through the sacred rays of chastity,  
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer  
Will dare to soil her virgin purity :  
Yea there, where very desolation dwells  
By grots, and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,  
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,  
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.  
Some say no evil thing that walks by night  
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,  
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,  
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,  
No goblin, or swart faëry of the mine,  
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.  
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call  
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece  
To testify the arms of chastity ?  
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,  
Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste,  
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness  
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought  
The frivolous bolt of Cupid ; gods and men

*Trace*, Track.

*Unharbour'd, Unsheltered.*  
*Unblench'd, Unflinching.*

## A Shorter Milton

Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen o' th'  
woods.

What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield  
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,  
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd  
stone,

But rigid looks of chaste austerity,  
And noble grace that dash'd brute violence  
With sudden adoration, and blank awe.  
So dear to Heav'n is saintly chastity,  
That when a soul is found sincerely so,  
A thousand liveried angels lacky her,  
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,  
And in clear dream, and solemn vision  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear ;  
Till oft converse with heav'nly habitants  
Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,  
The unpolluted temple of the mind,  
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
Till all be made immortal : but when lust  
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose  
The divine property of her first being.  
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp  
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres  
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,  
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,

*Gorgon shield.* The Gorgons were monsters who turned all they looked upon to stone. Only one, Medusa, was mortal, and she was killed by Perseus. The goddess Minerva wore Medusa's head on her breastplate, and there is a story that Cupid was afraid of it. He is also said to have been unable to pursue Diana the huntress, goddess of the moon, so swift was she in the chase.

## A Mask

And link'd itself by carnal sensuality  
To a degenerate and degraded state.

2 *Bro.* How charming is divine philosophy !  
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,  
But musical as is Apollo's lute,  
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

*Eld. Bro.* List, list, I hear  
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

2 *Bro.* Methought so too ; what should it be ?

*Eld. Bro.* For certain  
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,  
Or else some neighbour woodman, or at worst,  
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

2 *Bro.* Heav'n keep my Sister ; again, again,  
and near ;  
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

*Eld. Bro.* I'll halloo ;  
If he be friendly, he comes well ; if not,  
Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

*Enter the attendant Spirit, habited like a shepherd.*  
That halloo I should know, what are you ?  
speak ;  
Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else.

*Spir.* What voice is that, my young Lord ?  
speak again.

2 *Bro.* O Brother, 'tis my father's shepherd,  
sure.

*Eld. Bro.* Thyrsis ? Whose artful strains have  
oft delay'd  
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,  
And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale.

*Night-founder'd, Benighted.*

## A Shorter Milton

How cam'st thou here, good swain ? hath any  
ram

Slip't from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,  
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook ?  
How could'st thou find this dark sequester'd  
nook ?

*Spir.* O my lov'd master's heir, and his next  
joy,

I came not here on such a trivial toy  
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth  
Of pilfering wolf ; not all the fleecy wealth  
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought  
To this my errand, and the care it brought.  
But O my virgin Lady, where is she ?  
How chance she is not in your company ?

*Eld. Bro.* To tell thee sadly Shepherd, without  
blame,  
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

*Spir.* Aye me unhappy, then my fears are true.

*Eld. Bro.* What fears, good Thyrsis ? Prithee  
briefly shew.

*Spir.* I'll tell ye ; 'tis not vain or fabulous,  
'Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance,)   
What the sage poets taught by th'heav'nly Muse,  
Storied of old, in high immortal verse  
Of dire chimeras and enchanted isles,  
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell ;  
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood,  
Immur'd in cypress shades a sorcerer dwells,  
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,  
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries,  
And here to every thirsty wanderer,

## A Mask

By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,  
With many murmurs mixt, whose pleasing poison  
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,  
And the inglorious likeness of a beast  
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage  
Character'd in the face ; this have I learnt  
Tending my flocks hard by i' th' hilly crofts,  
That brow this bottom glade, whence night by  
night

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl  
Like stabl'd wolves, or tigers at their prey,  
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate  
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.  
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,  
To inveigle and invite th' unwary sense  
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.  
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks  
Had ta'en their supper on the savoury herb  
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,  
I sat me down to watch upon a bank  
With ivy canopied, and interwove  
With flaunting honey-suckle, and began  
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy  
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,  
Till fancy had her fill, but ere a close  
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,  
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance ;  
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them a while,  
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence  
Gave respite to the drowsy frightened steeds  
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep.  
At last a soft and solemn breathing sound  
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,

*Dew-besprent*, Besprinkled with dew.



## A Shorter Milton

And stole upon the air, that even Silence  
Was took ere she was ware, and wish'd she might  
Deny her nature, and be never more  
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,  
And took in strains that might create a soul  
Under the ribs of death ; but O ere long  
Too well I did perceive it was the voice  
Of my most honour'd Lady, your dear sister.  
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear,  
And ' O poor hapless nightingale,' thought I,  
' How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly  
snare ! '

Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste  
Through paths, and turnings oft'n trod by day,  
Till guided by mine ear I found the place  
Where that damn'd wizard hid in sly disguise  
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met  
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,  
The aidless innocent Lady his wish'd prey,  
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,  
Supposing him some neighbour villager ;  
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd  
Ye were the two she meant ; with that I sprung  
Into swift flight, till I had found you here,  
But further know I not.

2 *Bro.* O night and shades,  
How are ye join'd with Hell in triple knot  
Against th'unarmed weakness of one virgin,  
Alone and helpless ! Is this the confidence  
You gave me, Brother ?

*Eld. Bro.* Yes, and keep it still ;  
Lean on it safely, not a period  
Shall be unsaid for me : against the threats

## A Mask

Of malice or of sorcery, or that power  
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm,  
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,  
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd ;  
Yea even that which mischief meant most harm  
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.  
But evil on itself shall back recoil,  
And mix no more with goodness, when at last  
Gather'd like scum, and settl'd to itself  
It shall be in eternal restless change  
Self-fed, and self-consum'd ; if this fail,  
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,  
And earth's base built on stubble. But come,  
let's on.

Against th'opposing will and arm of Heav'n  
May never this just sword be lifted up,  
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt  
With all the grisly legions that troop  
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,  
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms  
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,  
And force him to restore his purchase back,  
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,  
Curs'd as his life.

*Spir.* Alas good venturous youth,  
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise,  
But here thy sword can do thee little stead ;  
Far other arms, and other weapons must  
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms ;  
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,  
And crumble all thy sinews.

*Enthrall'd*, Enslaved. *Acheron*, The Underworld.  
*Harpies*, Three monsters, half birds, half women, who carried off  
people who had disappeared.  
*Hydras*. See note on page 55. *Purchase*, What is stolen.

## A Shorter Milton

*Eld. Bro.* Why prithee, Shepherd,  
How dost thou then thyself approach so near  
As to make this relation ?

*Spir.* Care and utmost shifts  
How to secure the Lady from surprisal,  
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad  
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd  
In every virtuous plant and healing herb,  
That spreads her verdant leaf to th'morning ray ;  
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing,  
Which when I did, he on the tender grass  
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,  
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,  
And show me simples of a thousand names  
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties ;  
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,  
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out ;  
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,  
But in another country, as he said,  
Bore a bright golden flow'r, but not in this soil :  
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain  
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon,  
And yet more med'cinal is it than that moly  
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave ;  
He call'd it hæmony, and gave it me,  
And bade me keep it as of sovran use  
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew, blast, or damp  
Or ghastly furies' apparition.  
I purs'd it up, but little reck'ning made,  
Till now that this extremity compell'd.  
But now I find it true ; for by this means  
I knew the foul enchanter though disguis'd,

*To see to, To behold.*

*Clouted, Patched.*

*Moly, The plant which Hermes gave Ulysses to escape the enchantments of Circe.*

## A Mask

Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,  
And yet came off : if you have this about you,  
(As I will give you when we go) you may  
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall ;  
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,  
And brandish'd blade rush on him, break his  
    glass,  
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground.  
But seize his wand, though he and his curs'd  
    crew  
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,  
Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,  
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.  
    *Eld. Bro.* Thyrsis lead on apace, I'll follow  
    thee,  
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

*The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness ; soft music, tables spread with all dainties. Comus appears with his rabble, and the Lady set in an enchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

*Com.* Nay Lady, sit ; if I but wave this wand,  
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,  
And you a statue ; or as Daphne was  
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

*Lad.* Fool do not boast,  
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind  
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind  
Thou hast immanacl'd, while Heav'n sees good.

*Vulcan*, God of fire.

*Daphne*, Daughter of the river-god Peneus. Apollo, attracted by her beauty, pursued ; but just as he was overtaking her she was changed into a laurel tree, in answer to her prayers for aid.

## A Shorter Milton

*Com.* Why are you vext Lady? why do you frown?

Here dwell no frowns, nor anger, from these gates  
Sorrow flies far: See here be all the pleasures  
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,  
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns  
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.

And first behold this cordial julep here,  
That flames, and dances in his crystal bounds  
With spirits of balm, and fragrant syrups mixed.  
Not that *Nepenthes* which the wife of Thone,  
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena

Is of such power to stir up joy as this,  
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.

Why should you be so cruel to yourself,  
And to those dainty limbs which Nature lent  
For gentle usage, and soft delicacy?

But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,  
And harshly deal like an ill borrower  
With that which you receiv'd on other terms,  
Scorning the unexempt condition  
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,  
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,  
That have been tir'd all day without repast,  
And timely rest have wanted; but fair Virgin,  
This will restore all soon.

*Lad.* 'Twill not false traitor,  
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty  
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with  
lies.

Was this the cottage, and the safe abode  
Thou toldst me of? What grim aspects are  
these,

*Nepenthes*, The drug which Helen gave to her husband Menelaus.

## A Mask

These ugly-headed monsters ? Mercy guard me !  
Hence with thy brew'd enchantments, foul  
deceiver,

Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence  
With visor'd falsehood and base forgery,  
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here  
With lickerish baits fit to ensnare a brute ?  
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,  
I would not taste thy treasonous offer ; none  
But such as are good men can give good things,  
And that which is not good, is not delicious  
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.

*Com.* O foolishness of men ! that lend their  
ears

To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,  
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,  
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.  
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth,  
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,  
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,  
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,  
But all to please, and sate the curious taste ?  
And set to work millions of spinning worms,  
That in their green shops weave the smooth-  
hair'd silk

To deck her sons, and that no corner might  
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins  
She hutch'd th' all-worshipp'd ore, and precious  
gems

To store her children with ; if all the world  
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,

*Lickerish*, Attractive to the taste.

*Budge*, Surly.

*Tub*. Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher of Athens, took up  
residence in a tub, to show his contempt of wealth and oomfort.

*Hutch'd*, Shut in.

## A Shorter Milton

Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,  
Th'all-giver would be unthank'd, would be un-  
prais'd,

Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd ;  
And we should serve him as a grudging master,  
As a penurious niggard of his wealth ;  
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,  
Who would be quite surcharged with her own  
weight,

And strangl'd with her waste fertility ;  
Th'earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark'd with  
plumes,

The herds would over-multitude their lords,  
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and th'unsought  
diamonds

Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,  
And so bestud with stars, that they below  
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last  
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.

List Lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd  
With that same vaunted name Virginitv.

Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,  
But must be current, and the good thereof  
Consists in mutual and partak'n bliss,  
Unsavoury in th'enjoyment of itself ;

If you let slip time, like a neglected rose  
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.

Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown  
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities  
Where most may wonder at the workmanship ;  
It is for homely features to keep home,  
They had their name thence ; coarse complexions  
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply

## A Mask

The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.  
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,  
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn ?  
There was another meaning in these gifts,  
Think what, and be advis'd, you are but young  
yet.

*Lad.* I had not thought to have unlock'd my  
lips  
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler  
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine  
eyes,

Obtruding false rules prank'd in reason's garb.  
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,  
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride :  
Imposter do not charge most innocent Nature,  
As if she would her children should be riotous  
With her abundance ; she good cateress  
Means her provision only to the good  
That live according to her sober laws,  
And holy dictate of spare temperance :  
If every just man that now pines with want  
Had but a moderate and beseeming share  
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd luxury  
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens'd  
In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
And she no whit encumber'd with her store ;  
And then the giver would be better thank'd,  
His praise due paid ; for swinish gluttony  
Ne'er looks to Heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,  
But with besotted base ingratitude  
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on ?  
Or have I said enough ? To him that dares



## A Shorter Milton

Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words  
Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,  
Fain would I something say, yet to what end ?  
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul to apprehend  
The sublime notion, and high mystery,  
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of Virginitv ;

And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not  
know

More happiness than this thy present lot.  
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,  
That hath so well been taught her dazzling  
fence,

Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd ;  
Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth  
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits  
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,  
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,  
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and  
shake,

Till all thy magic structures rear'd so high,  
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

*Com.* She fables not, I feel that I do fear  
Her words set off by some superior power ;  
And though not mortal, yet a cold shudd'ring  
dew

Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove  
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus  
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,  
And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more ;

*Fence*, The art of defence.

*Erebus* was the god of darkness, but his name was used to denote the Underworld.

*Saturn's crew*. The Titans, whom Jupiter overthrew and imprisoned below Tartarus, contended the sovereignty of heaven with Saturn, father of Jupiter.

## A Mask

This is mere moral babble, and direct  
Against the canon laws of our foundation ;  
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees  
And settlings of a melancholy blood ;  
But this will cure all straight, one sip of this  
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight  
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

*The Brothers rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground ; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The attendant Spirit comes in.*

*Spir.* What, have you let the false enchanter  
'scape ?  
O ye mistook, ye should have snatch'd his wand,  
And bound him fast ; without his rod revers'd,  
And backward mutters of dissevering power,  
We cannot free the Lady that sits here  
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless.  
Yet stay, be not disturb'd, now I bethink me,  
Some other means I have which may be us'd,  
Which once of Melibæus old I learnt,  
The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains.  
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,  
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn  
stream,  
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure,  
Whilom she was the daughter of Lochrine,  
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.  
The guiltless damsel flying the mad pursuit

*Melibæus* was the name of a shepherd in Virgil's poems.

*Soothest*, Truest.

*Brute*, the Trojan, was a mythical hero, who escaped after the fall of Troy and became king of Britain.

## A Shorter Milton

Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,  
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,  
That stay'd her flight with his cross-flowing  
course.

The water nymphs that in the bottom played,  
Held up their pearled wrists and took her in,  
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall,  
Who piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,  
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe  
In nectar'd lavers strew'd with asphodel,  
And through the porch and inlet of each sense  
Dropt in ambrosial oils till she reviv'd,  
And underwent a quick immortal change,  
Made Goddess of the river ; still she retains  
Her maid'n gentleness, and oft at eve  
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,  
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs  
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,  
Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals.  
For which the shepherds at their festivals  
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,  
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream  
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.  
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock  
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,  
If she be right invok'd in warbled song ;  
For maid'nhood she loves, and will be swift  
To aid a virgin, such as was herself  
In hard besetting need ; this will I try,  
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

*Nereus*, Son of Oceanus, father of the Nereids (see note on page 49).

*Asphodel*, A plant which grew in Elysium, the abode of the blessed in the Underworld.

## A Mask

### Song

Sabrina fair

Listen where thou art sitting  
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,  
In twisted braids of lilies knitting  
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair ;  
Listen for dear honour's sake,  
Goddess of the silver lake,  
Listen and save.

Listen and appear to us  
In name of great Oceanus,  
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,  
And Tethys' grave majestic pace,  
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,  
And the Carpathian wizard's hook,  
By scaly Triton's winding shell,  
And old sooth-saying Glaucus' spell,  
By Leucothea's lovely hands,  
And her son that rules the strands,  
By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,  
And the songs of Sirens sweet,  
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,  
And fair Ligea's golden comb,

*Tethys* was wife of Oceanus and mother of Nereus.

*Carpathian wizard*, Proteus, a sea-god who had the power of assuming any form he pleased. He had great powers of prophecy, and lived in a cave at Carpathus, an island in the Mediterranean.

*Triton*, A sea-god, son of Neptune, who blew through a shell to calm the sea.

*Glaucus*, A fisherman who became a sea-god by eating of a divine herb.

*Leucothea*, Daughter of Cadmus, founder of Thebes ; she became a sea-goddess. Her son Palæmon was called by the Romans Portumnus, protecting god of ports.

*Thetis*, A sea-nymph, daughter of Nereus.

*Tinsel*, Refers to the sparkle of the sea.

*Sirens*. See note on page 72.

*Parthenope and Ligea* were two of the Sirens.

## A Shorter Milton

Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks  
Sleeking her soft alluring locks,  
By all the nymphs that nightly dance  
Upon thy streams with wily glance,  
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head  
From thy coral-pav'n bed,  
And bridle in thy headlong wave,  
Till thou our summons answered have.  
Listen and save.

*Sabrina rises, attended by water-nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,  
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,  
My sliding chariot stays,  
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen  
Of turkis blue, and emerald green  
That in the channel strays,  
Whilst from off the waters fleet  
Thus I set my printless feet  
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,  
That bends not as I tread,  
Gentle Swain at thy request  
I am here.

*Spir.* Goddess dear,  
We implore thy powerful hand  
To undo the charmed band  
Of true virgin here distress,  
Through the force, and through the wile  
Of unblest enchanter vile.

*Sabr.* Shepherd 'tis my office best  
To help insnared chastity ;  
Brightest Lady look on me ;  
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast

## A Mask

Drops that from my fountain pure,  
I have kept of precious cure,  
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,  
Thrice upon thy rubied lip ;  
Next this marble venom'd seat  
Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat  
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold ;  
Now the spell hath lost his hold ;  
And I must haste ere morning hour  
To wait in Amphitrite's bow'r.

*Sabrina descends, and the Lady rises out of her seat.*

*Spir.* Virgin, daughter of Locrine,  
Sprung of old Anchises' line,  
May thy brimmed waves for this  
Their full tribute never miss  
From a thousand petty rills,  
That tumble down the snowy hills :  
Summer drouth, or singed air  
Never scorch thy tresses fair,  
Nor wet October's torrent flood  
Thy molten crystal fill with mud ;  
May thy billows roll ashore  
The beryl, and the golden ore ;  
May thy lofty head be crown'd  
With many a tower and terrace round,  
And here and there thy banks upon  
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come Lady, while Heaven lends us grace,  
Let us fly this cursed place,

*Anchises*, Father of Æneas of Troy. Milton is claiming relationship for Sabrina with the Trojan heroes, as granddaughter of Brute the Trojan (see page 91).

## A Shorter Milton

Lest the sorcerer us entice  
With some other new device.  
Not a waste, or needless sound,  
Till we come to holier ground ;  
I shall be your faithful guide  
Through this gloomy covert wide,  
And not many furlongs thence  
Is your Father's residence,  
Where this night are met in state  
Many a friend to gratulate  
His wish'd presence, and beside  
All the swains that there abide,  
With jigs, and rural dance resort ;  
We shall catch them at their sport,  
And our sudden coming there  
Will double all their mirth and cheer ;  
Come let us haste, the stars grow high,  
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

*The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the President's castle ; then come in country dancers, after them the attendant Spirit, with the two Brothers and the Lady.*

### Song

*Spir.* Back Shepherds, back, enough your play  
Till next sunshine holiday ;  
Here be without duck or nod  
Other trippings to be trod  
Of lighter toes, and such court guise  
As Mercury did first devise

*Duck and nod*, The clumsy gestures of country dances, as opposed to more courtly *mincing*.

## A Mask

With the mincing Dryades  
On the lawns, and on the leas.

*This second Song presents them to their Father  
and Mother.*

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,  
I have brought ye new delight,  
Here behold so goodly grown  
Three fair branches of your own ;  
Heav'n hath timely tri'd their youth,  
Their faith, their patience, and their truth.  
And sent them here through hard assays  
With a crown of deathless praise,  
To triumph in victorious dance  
O'er sensual folly, and intemperance.

*The dances ended, the Spirit epiloguises.*

*Spir.* To the ocean now I fly,  
And those happy climes that lie  
Where day never shuts his eye,  
Up in the broad fields of the sky :  
There I suck the liquid air  
All amidst the gardens fair  
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three  
That sing about the golden tree :  
Along the crisped shades and bowers  
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,  
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,  
Thither all their bounties bring ;

*Dryades*, Wood-nymphs.

*Assays*, Trials.

*Hesperus*, The evening star ; in a garden on an island beyond  
Mount Atlas, his three daughters watched over the golden apples  
which grew there.

*Crisped*, Rippled by the wind.



## A Shorter Milton

There eternal Summer dwells,  
And west winds, with musky wing  
About the cedarn alleys fling  
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.  
Iris there with humid bow  
Waters the odorous banks that blow  
Flowers of more mingled hue  
Than her purfl'd scarf can show,  
And drenches with Elysian dew  
(List mortals, if your ears be true)  
Beds of hyacinth and roses,  
Where young Adonis oft reposes,  
Waxing well of his deep wound  
In slumber soft, and on the ground  
Sadly sits th' Assyrian queen ;  
But far above in spangled sheen  
Celestial Cupid her fam'd son advanc'd,  
Holds his dear Psyche sweet intranc'd  
After her wand'ring labours long,  
Till free consent the gods among  
Make her his eternal bride,  
And from her fair unspotted side  
Two blissful twins are to be born,  
Youth and Joy ; so Jove hath sworn.  
But now my task is smoothly done,  
I can fly, or I can run  
Quickly to the green earth's end,  
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend,

*Iris* was the rainbow, messenger of the gods.

*Purfl'd*, Fringed, embroidered.

*Adonis*, A beautiful youth, loved by Venus ; he was killed by a wild boar.

*Assyrian queen*. Venus was worshipped by the Assyrians under the name of Astarte.

*Psyche* was a maiden beloved by Cupid, god of love. At first she aroused the jealousy of his mother, Venus, but finally she overcame this and was made immortal by Jupiter.

## A Mask.

And from thence can soar as soon  
To the corners of the moon.

Mortals that would follow me,  
Love Virtue, she alone is free.  
She can teach ye how to climb  
Higher than the sphery chime ;  
Or if Virtue feeble were,  
Heav'n itself would stoop to her.

# PARADISE LOST

## *Book I*

### THE ARGUMENT

THIS First Book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject, Man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed : then touches the prime cause of his fall, the serpent, or rather Satan in the serpent ; who revolting from God, and drawing to his side many legions of Angels, was by the command of God driven out of heaven with all his crew into the great deep. Which action passed over, the Poem hastes into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his Angels now fallen into hell, described here, not in the centre (for heaven and earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed) but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos : here Satan with his Angels, lying on the burning lake, thunderstruck and astonished, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by him ; they confer of their miserable fall. Satan awakens all his legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded ; they rise ; their numbers, array of battle, their chief leaders named, according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining heaven, but tells them lastly of a new world and new kind of creature to be created, according to an ancient prophecy or report in heaven ; for that Angels were long before this visible creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this prophecy, and what to determine thereon, he refers to a full council. What his

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

associates thence attempt. Pandæmonium the palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the deep: the infernal Peers there sit in council.

OF Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth  
Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd  
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples th'upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the  
first

Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss  
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the highth of this great argument

*Oreb.* In the book of Deuteronomy the Law is said to have been given to Moses on Mount Horeb; in the book of Exodus, Moses receives the table of the Commandments on Mount Sinai.

*Sion,* The hill opposite to Moriah, on which latter the Temple was built. Near by in the valley was the pool of *Siloam*, whose waters rose and fell at intervals.

*Aonia,* Part of Bœotia, where were Mount Helicon and the fountain Aganippe, the favourite haunts of the Muses.

## A Shorter Milton

I may assert eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy  
view

Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause  
Mov'd our grand parents in that happy state,  
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off

From their Creator, and transgress his will  
For one restraint, lords of the world besides ?

Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt ?

Th'infernal serpent ; he it was, whose guile,

Stirr'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd

The mother of mankind, what time his pride

Had cast him out from heav'n, with all his host

Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring

To set himself in glory above his peers,

He trusted to have equall'd the most High,

If he oppos'd ; and with ambitious aim

Against the throne and monarchy of God

Raised impious war in Heav'n and battle proud

With vain attempt. Him the almighty Power

Hurl'd headlong flaming from th'ethereal sky

With hideous ruin and combustion down

To bottomless perdition, there to dwell

In adamant chains and penal fire,

Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.

Nine times the space that measures day and  
night

To mortal men, he with his horrid crew

Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the fiery gulf

Confounded though immortal : but his doom

Reserv'd him to more wrath ; for now the thought

Both of lost happiness and lasting pain

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Torments him ; round he throws his baleful eyes  
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay  
Mixt with obdurate pride and steadfast hate :  
At once as far as angel's ken he views  
The dismal situation waste and wild ;  
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,  
As one great furnace flam'd, yet from those  
flames

No light, but rather darkness visible  
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
That comes to all ; but torture without end  
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed  
With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd :  
Such place eternal justice had prepar'd  
For those rebellious, here their prison ordain'd  
In utter darkness, and their portion set  
As far remov'd from God and light of Heav'n  
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.  
O how unlike the place from whence they fell !  
There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelm'd  
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,  
He soon discerns, and welt'ring by his side  
One next himself in power, and next in crime,  
Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd  
Beëlzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,  
And thence in Heav'n call'd Satan, with bold  
words

Breaking the horrid silence thus began.

' If thou beest he ; but O how fall'n ! how  
chang'd

From him, who in the happy realms of light  
Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-  
shine

## A Shorter Milton

Myriads though bright : if he whom mutual  
league,  
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,  
Join'd with me once, now misery hath join'd  
In equal ruin : into what pit thou seest  
From what highth fall'n, so much the stronger  
prov'd

He with his thunder : and till then who knew  
The force of those dire arms ? yet not for those  
Nor what the potent Victor in his rage  
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,  
Though chang'd in outward lustre ; that fix'd  
mind

And high disdain, from sense of injur'd merit,  
That with the Mightiest rais'd me to contend,  
And to the fierce contention brought along  
Innumerable force of Spirits arm'd  
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,  
His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd  
In dubious battle on the plains of Heav'n,  
And shook his throne. What though the field be  
lost ?

All is not lost ; the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate  
And courage never to submit or yield :  
And what is else not to be overcome ?  
That glory never shall his wrath or might  
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
With suppliant knee, and deify his power  
Who from the terror of this arm so late  
Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,  
That were an ignominy and shame beneath

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

This downfall ; since by fate the strength of  
    gods

And this empyreal substance cannot fail,  
Since through experience of this great event  
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanc'd,  
We may with more successful hope resolve  
To wage by force or guile eternal war  
Irreconcilable, to our grand foe,  
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy  
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heav'n.'

So spake th' apostate Angel, though in pain,  
Vaunting aloud, but rack'd with deep despair :  
And him thus answer'd soon his bold compeer.

' O Prince. O chief of many throned Powers,  
That led th' imbattl'd Seraphim to war  
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds  
Fearless, endanger'd Heav'n's perpetual King ;  
And put to proof his high supremacy,  
Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate,  
Too well I see and rue the dire event,  
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat  
Hath lost us Heav'n, and all this mighty host  
In horrible destruction laid thus low,  
As far as gods and Heav'nly essences  
Can perish : for the mind and spirit remains  
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,  
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state  
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.  
But what if he our conqueror (whom I now  
Of force believe almighty, since no less  
Than such could have o'erpower'd such force as  
    ours)

Have left us this our spirit and strength entire  
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,  
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,



## A Shorter Milton

Or do him mightier service as his thralls  
By right of war, whate'er his business be  
Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,  
Or do his errands in the gloomy deep ;  
What can it then avail though yet we feel  
Strength undiminish'd or eternal being  
To undergo eternal punishment ? '  
Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-fiend re-  
ply'd.

' Fall'n Cherub, to be weak is miserable  
Doing or suffering : but of this be sure,  
To do ought good never will be our task,  
But ever to do ill our sole delight,  
As being the contrary to his high will  
Whom we resist. If then his providence  
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,  
Our labour must be to pervert that end,  
And out of good still to find means of evil ;  
Which oft-times may succeed, so as perhaps  
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb  
His inmost counsels from their destin'd aim.  
But see ! the angry Victor hath recall'd  
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit  
Back to the gates of Heav'n : the sulphurous hail  
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid  
The fiery surge, that from the precipice  
Of Heav'n receiv'd us falling, and the thunder,  
Wing'd with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now  
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep  
Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn,  
Or satiate fury yield it from our foe.  
Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

The seat of desolation, void of light,  
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend  
From off the tossing of these fiery waves,  
There rest, if any rest can harbour there,  
And reassembling our afflicted powers,  
Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,  
How overcome this dire calamity,  
What reinforcement we may gain from hope,  
If not what resolution from despair.'

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate  
With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes  
That sparkling blaz'd; his other parts besides  
Prone on the flood, extended long and large  
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,  
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,  
Briareus, or Typhon, whom the den  
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast  
Leviathan, which God of all his works  
Created hugest that swim th' ocean stream:  
Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam  
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff,  
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind  
Moors by his side under the lee, while night

*Titanian.* The six Titans, sons of Uranus and Ge (the Earth), contended with Saturn for the sovereignty of Heaven. Saturn's son Jupiter defeated them with his thunderbolts.

*Briareus,* A hundred-armed giant.

*Typhon,* A god who wished to acquire sovereignty over gods and men, but was killed by the thunderbolt of Jupiter and buried under Mount Etna.

*Tarsus,* A city of Asia Minor, birthplace of St. Paul.

*Leviathan,* A sea-monster (see Job xli.). Milton here uses the word to mean a whale.

*Night-founder'd,* Benighted.

## A Shorter Milton

Invests the sea, and wished morn delays :  
So stretch'd out huge in length the Arch-fiend  
lay

Chain'd on the burning lake, nor ever thence  
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will  
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
Left him at large to his own dark designs,  
That with reiterated crimes he might  
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought  
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see  
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth  
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown  
On man by him seduc'd, but on himself  
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.  
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
His mighty stature ; on each hand the flames  
Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and  
roll'd

In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.  
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight  
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,  
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land  
He lights, if it were land that ever burn'd  
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire ;  
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force  
Of subterranean wind transports a hill  
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side  
Of thund'ring Ætna, whose combustible  
And fuel'd entrails thence conceiving fire,  
Sublim'd with mineral fury, aid the winds,  
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd  
With stench and smoke : such resting found the  
sole

*Pelorus*, The north-eastern promontory of Sicily, near Cape Faro.

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Of unblest'd feet. Him followed his next mate,  
Both glorying to have 'scap'd the Stygian flood,  
As gods, and by their own recover'd strength,  
Not by the sufferance of supernal power.

'Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,'  
Said then the lost Archangel, 'this the seat  
That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful  
gloom

For that celestial light? Be it so, since he  
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid  
What shall be right: farthest from him is best  
Whom reason hath equall'd, force hath made  
supreme

Above his equals. Farewell happy fields  
Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail  
Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell  
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings  
A mind not to be chang'd by place or time.  
The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.  
What matter where, if I be still the same,  
And what I should be, all but less than he  
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at  
least

We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built  
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:  
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice  
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.  
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,  
Th' associates and copartners of our loss  
Lie thus astonish'd on th' oblivious pool,  
And call them not to share with us their part  
In this unhappy mansion, or once more  
With rallied arms to try what may be yet

## A Shorter Milton

Regained in Heav'n, or what more lost in Hell ? '

So Satan spake, and him Beëlzebub

Thus answer'd : ' Leader of those armies bright,  
Which but th' Omnipotent none could have  
foil'd,

If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge  
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft  
In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge  
Of battle when it rag'd. in all assaults  
Their surest signal, they will soon resume  
New courage and revive, though now they lie  
Groveling and prostrate on yon lake of fire,  
As we erewhile, astounded and amaz'd,  
No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious highth.'

He scarce had ceas'd, when the superior fiend  
Was moving toward the shore ; his ponderous  
shield

Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,  
Behind him cast ; the broad circumference  
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb  
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
At ev'ning from the top of Fesole,  
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,  
Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.  
His spear, to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast,  
Of some great admiral, were but a wand,  
He walk'd with to support uneasy steps  
Over the burning marle, not like those steps  
On Heav'n's azure ; and the torrid clime  
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire ;

*Tuscan artist*, Galileo.

*Fesole*, Fiesole, on a hill three miles from Florence.

*Valdarno*, Val' d'Arno, the valley of the Arno, in which Florence  
is situated.

*Admiral*, The admiral's flagship, the chief vessel of the fleet.

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Nathless he so endur'd, till on the beach  
Of that inflamed sea, he stood and call'd  
His legions, Angel forms, who lay entranc'd  
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks  
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades  
High overarch'd embow'r ; or scatter'd sedge  
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion arm'd  
Hath vex'd the Red-sea coast, whose waves  
o'erthrew

Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,  
While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd  
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld  
From the safe shore their floating carcasses  
And broken chariot wheels, so thick bestrown  
Abject and lost lay these, covering the flood,  
Under amazement of their hideous change.  
He call'd so loud, that all the hollow deep  
Of hell resounded. ' Princes, Potentates,  
Warriors, the flow'r of Heav'n, once yours, now  
lost,

If such astonishment as this can seize  
Eternal spirits ; or have ye chos'n this place  
After the toil of battle to repose  
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find  
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heav'n ?

*Vallombrosa*, Eighteen miles from Florence in Tuscany, the ancient Etruria.

*Orion*, A giant hunter, who at his death was placed among the stars. His constellation sets at the beginning of November, a time of storms.

*Red-sea*. The Hebrew name for the Red Sea is the Sea of Sedge, from the seaweed therein.

*Busiris*, A Pharaoh of Egypt, who sacrificed all strangers, until he attempted to sacrifice Hercules and was slain by him. Milton here suggests that he was the Pharaoh who pursued the Children of Israel and perished in the Red Sea.

*Memphis* was one of the chief cities of Egypt.

*Chivalry*, Cavalry.

## A Shorter Milton

Or in this abject posture have ye sworn  
To adore the Conqueror ? who now beholds  
Cherub and seraph rolling in the flood  
With scatter'd arms and ensigns, till anon  
His swift pursuers from Heav'n gates discern  
Th' advantage, and descending tread us down  
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts  
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf.  
Awake, arise, or be for ever fall'n.'

They heard, and were abash'd, and up they  
sprung  
Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch  
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,  
Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.  
Nor did they not perceive the evil plight  
In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel ;  
Yet to their general's voice they soon obey'd,  
Innumerable. As when the potent rod  
Of Amram's son in Egypt's evil day  
Wav'd round the coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud  
Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,  
That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung  
Like night, and darken'd all the land of Nile :  
So numberless were those bad angels seen  
Hovering on wing under the cope of Hell  
'Twixt upper, nether and surrounding fires ;  
Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted spear  
Of their great sultan waving to direct  
Their course, in even balance down they light  
On the firm brimstone, and fill all the plain ;  
A multitude like which the populous north  
Pour'd never from her frozen loins, to pass  
Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous sons

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Came like a deluge on the south, and spread  
Beneath Gibraltar to the Libyan sands.  
Forthwith from every squadron and each band  
The heads and leaders thither haste where stood  
Their great commander ; godlike shapes and  
forms

Excelling human, princely Dignities,  
And Powers that erst in Heaven sat on thrones ;  
Though of their names in heav'nly records now  
Be no memorial, blotted out and raz'd  
By their rebellion from the books of life.  
Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve  
Got them new names, till wand'ring o'er the  
earth,

Through God's high sufferance for the trial of  
man,

By falsities and lies the greatest part  
Of mankind they corrupted to forsake  
God their creator, and th' invisible  
Glory of him, that made them, to transform  
Oft to the image of a brute, adorn'd  
With gay religions full of pomp and gold,  
And devils to adore for deities :

Then were they known to men by various names,  
And various idols through the heathen world.

Say, Muse, their names then known, who first,  
who last,

Rous'd from the slumber on that fiery couch,  
At their great Emperor's call, as next in worth  
Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,  
While the promiscuous crowd stood yet aloof ?  
The chief were those who from the pit of Hell  
Roaming to seek their prey on earth, durst fix

*Beneath Gibraltar*, South of Gibraltar. The Vandals settled in  
north Africa.

(4,172)



## A Shorter Milton

Their seats long after next the seat of God,  
Their altars by his altar, gods ador'd  
Among the nations round, and durst abide  
Jehovah thund'ring out of Sion, thron'd  
Between the Cherubim ; yea, often plac'd  
Within his sanctuary itself their shrines,  
Abominations ; and with cursed things  
His holy rites, and solemn feasts profan'd,  
And with their darkness durst affront his light.  
First Moloch, horrid king besmear'd with blood  
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears,  
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud  
Their children's cries unheard, that past through  
fire

To his grim idol. Him the Ammonite  
Worshipp'd in Rabba and her wat'ry plain,  
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream  
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such  
Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart  
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build  
His temple right against the temple of God  
On that opprobrious hill, and made his grove  
The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence  
And black Gehenna call'd, the type of Hell.

*Moloch*, An idol to whom children were sacrificed, their cries being drowned by the noise of drums.

*Arnon*. The Arnon flows into the Dead Sea and was the north boundary of Moab. Milton incorrectly supposes the Ammonites to have held all the territory from here to Argob and Basan, which are to the east of the Sea of Galilee. *Rabba* (Rabbath Moab), one of the chief cities of Moab, was south of the Arnon.

*Opprobrious hill*, The hill south of the Mount of Olives, which lay due east of Mount Moriah, on which the Temple stood (see I. Kings xi. 7).

*Hinnom*, A valley, south-east of Jerusalem, in which was the king's garden.

*Tophet*, The place where the refuse of Jerusalem and also the bodies of criminals were burned ; so that it was called Gehenna, the Hebrew name for the place of punishment in the next world.

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moab's sons,  
From Aroer to Nebo, and the wild  
Of southmost Abarim ; in Hesebon  
And Horonaim, Seon's realm, beyond  
The flow'ry dale of Sibma clad with vines,  
And Eleale to th' Asphaltic pool.  
Peor his other name, when he entic'd  
Israel in Sittim, on their march from Nile  
To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.  
Yet thence his lustful orgies he enlarg'd  
Even to that hill of scandal, by the grove  
Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate ;  
Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.  
With these came they, who from the bord'ring  
flood  
Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts  
Egypt from Syrian ground, had general names  
Of Baalim and Ashtaroth, those male,  
These feminine : for spirits when they please  
Can either sex assume, or both ; so soft  
And uncompounded is their essence pure,  
Not ti'd or manacl'd with joint or limb,  
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,  
Like cumbrous flesh ; but in what shape they  
choose  
Dilated or condens'd, bright or obscure,  
Can execute their airy purposes,  
And works of love or enmity fulfil.  
For those the race of Israel oft forsook

*Chemos*, or Baal-Peor, was a Phœnician god.

*Abarim*, The mountain range to the east of the Dead Sea, called the Mountains of Moab. *Nebo* was part of it. *Aroer*, *Hesebon*, *Sibma*, and *Eleale* were to the east of the Mountains of Moab.

*Asphaltic pool*, The Dead Sea.

*Sittim*, In the Plains of Moab.

*Ashtaroth*, *Astarte*, The Syrian and Phœnician goddess of the moon (see I. Kings xi. 5).

## A Shorter Milton

Their living strength, and unfrequented left  
His righteous altar, bowing lowly down  
To bestial gods ; for which their heads as low  
Bow'd down in battle, sunk before the spear  
Of despicable foes. With these in troop  
Came Astoreth, whom the Phœnicians call'd  
Astarte, queen of Heav'n, with crescent horns ;  
To whose bright image nightly by the moon  
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs,  
In Sion also not unsung, where stood  
Her temple on th' offensive mountain, built  
By that uxorious king, whose heart though large,  
Beguil'd by fair idolatresses, fell  
To idols foul. Thammuz came next behind,  
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd  
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate  
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,  
While smooth Adonis from his native rock  
Ran purple to the sea, suppos'd with blood  
Of Thammuz yearly wounded : the love-tale  
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,  
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch  
Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led  
His eyes survey'd the dark idolatries  
Of alienated Judah. Next came one  
Who mourn'd in earnest, when the captive ark  
Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopt off  
In his own temple, on the grunsel edge,  
Where he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers :

*Uxorious king*, Solomon.

*Thammuz*, The Phœnician Adonis, beloved by Astarte. He was supposed every year to die, and to return to life for six months, a symbol of the revival of nature in summer. The river Adonis rose in the Lebanon Mountains, and when it ran discoloured in flood, it was supposed that this was the blood of Thammuz (see also Ezekiel viii. 14).

*Grunsel*, Ground sill, threshold.

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Dagon his name, sea monster, upward man  
 And downward fish : yet had his temple high  
 Rear'd in Azotus, dreaded through the coast  
 Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon,  
 And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.  
 Him follow'd Rimmon, whose delightful seat  
 Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks  
 Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.  
 He also against the house of God was bold :  
 A leper once he lost and gain'd a king,  
 Ahaz his sottish conqueror, whom he drew  
 God's altar to disparage and displace  
 For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn  
 His odious off'rings, and adore the gods  
 Whom he had vanquish'd. After these appear'd  
 A crew who under names of old renown,  
 Osiris, Isis, Orus and their train  
 With monstrous shapes and sorceries abus'd  
 Fanatic Egypt and her priests, to seek  
 Their wand'ring Gods disguis'd in brutish forms  
 Rather than human. Nor did Israel 'scape  
 Th' infection when their borrow'd gold compos'd  
 The calf in Oreb : and the rebel king

*Dagon*, A god of the Philistines (see I. Samuel v. 4).

*Azotus* (Ashdod), *Gath* and *Ascalon*, *Accaron* (Ekron) and *Gaza*, were cities of the Philistines.

*Rimmon*, A Syrian god.

*Damascus*, Chief city of Syria, on the river *Abbana* (Abanah) ; the *Pharphar* is farther south.

*Leper*, Refers to the story of Naaman (II. Kings v. 1-19).

*Ahaz*, King of Judah, captured Damascus with the aid of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, and brought the worship of Rimmon back to Jerusalem with him (II. Kings xvi. 5-16).

*Osiris*, The chief Egyptian god, husband of *Isis*.

*Orus*, The Egyptian sun-god.

*Oreb*. For the story of the worship of the golden calf by the Children of Israel in Horeb, see Exodus xxxii. 4-28.

*Rebel king*, Jeroboam, who set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan (I. Kings xii. 28-33).

## A Shorter Milton

Doubl'd that sin in Bethel and in Dan,  
Lik'ning his Maker to the grazed ox.  
Jehovah, who in one night when he pass'd  
From Egypt marching, equall'd with one stroke  
Both her first-born and all her bleating gods.  
Belial came last, than whom a spirit more lewd  
Fell not from heaven, or more gross to love  
Vice for itself : to him no temple stood  
Or altar smok'd ; yet who more oft than he  
In temples and at altars, when the priest  
Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who fill'd  
With lust and violence the house of God.  
In courts and palaces he also reigns  
And in luxurious cities, where the noise  
Of riot ascends above their loftiest tow'rs,  
And injury and outrage : and when night  
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons  
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.  
Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night  
In Gibeah, when hospitable doors  
Yielded their matrons to prevent worse rape.

These were the prime in order and in might ;  
The rest were long to tell, though far renown'd,  
Th' Ionian gods, of Javan's issue held  
Gods, yet confess'd later than Heav'n and Earth  
Their boasted parents ; Titan Heav'n's first-  
born  
With his enormous brood and birthright seiz'd  
By younger Saturn, he from mightier Jove

*Eli's sons.* The sons of the high-priest Eli were worthless fellows, and are described as ' sons of Belial ' (I. Samuel ii. 12).

*Javan.* One of the sons of Japhet, from whom the Ionians were descended.

*Titan.* See note on page 107. Rhea was wife of Saturn. He devoured their children ; but when Jupiter was born she hid him in Crete and gave to Saturn a stone, wrapped up like a child, which he swallowed. Jupiter, when he grew up, overthrew Saturn.

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

His own and Rhea's son like measure found ;  
So Jove usurping reign'd : these first in Crete  
And Ida known, thence on the snowy top  
Of cold Olympus rul'd the middle air  
Their Highest heav'n ; or on the Delphian cliff,  
Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds  
Of Doric land ; or who with Saturn old  
Fled over Adria to th' Hesperian fields,  
And o'er the Celtic roam'd the utmost isles.

All these and more came flocking ; but with  
looks  
Down-cast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd  
Obscure some glimpse of joy, to have found their  
chief

Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost  
In loss itself ; which on his count'nance cast  
Like doubtful hue : but he his wonted pride  
Soon recollecting, with high words, that bore  
Semblance of worth not substance, gently rais'd  
Their fainted courage, and dispell'd their fears.  
Then straight commands that at the warlike  
sound

Of trumpets loud and clarions be uprear'd  
His mighty standard ; that proud honour claim'd  
Azazel as his right, a cherub tall ;  
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd  
Th' imperial ensign, which full high advanc'd  
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind  
With gems and golden lustre rich emblaz'd,  
Seraphic arms and trophies, all the while

*Delphian cliff.* Delphi, in Phocis, north of the Gulf of Corinth, where there was the most famous oracle of the ancient world.

*Dodona,* In Epirus, in the north-west of Greece, where there was an oracle of Jupiter.

*Doric land,* Greece.

*Adria,* The Adriatic Sea ; *Hesperian fields* is here used to mean Italy.

*Azazel,* An evil spirit.

## A Shorter Milton

Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds :  
At which the universal host up sent  
A shout that tore hell's concave, and beyond  
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.  
All in a moment through the gloom were seen  
Ten thousand banners rise into the air  
With orient colours waving : with them rose  
A forest huge of spears : and thronging helms  
Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array  
Of depth immeasurable : anon they move  
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood  
Of flutes and soft recorders ; such as rais'd  
To highth of noblest temper heroes old  
Arming to battle, and instead of rage  
Deliberate valour breath'd, firm and unmov'd  
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat,  
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage  
With solemn touches, troubl'd thoughts, and chase  
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain  
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they  
Breathing united force with fixed thought  
Mov'd on in silence to soft pipes that charm'd  
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil ; and now  
Advanc'd in view they stand, a horrid front  
Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise  
Of warriors old with order'd spear and shield,  
Awaiting what command their mighty chief  
Had to impose : he through the armed files  
Darts his experienc'd eye, and soon traverse  
The whole battalion views, their order due,  
Their visages and stature as of gods,

*Orient*, Here means bright.

*Serried*, Pressed close together.

*Phalanx*, The order in which Greek troops advanced to battle.

*Dorian mood*. The Spartans, who were Dorians, used the solemn Dorian music as they advanced to battle.

*Recorder*, A kind of flute.

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Their number last he sums. And now his heart  
Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength  
Glories : for never since created man,  
Met such embodied force, as nam'd with these  
Could merit more than that small infantry  
Warr'd on by cranes : though all the giant brood  
Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were join'd  
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side  
Mix'd with auxiliar gods ; and what resounds  
In fable or romance of Uther's son  
Begirt with British and Armoric knights ;  
And all who since, baptiz'd or infidel,  
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,  
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond  
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore  
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell  
By Fontarabia. Thus far these beyond  
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd  
Their dread commander : he above the rest  
In shape and gesture proudly eminent  
Stood like a tow'r ; his form had yet not lost  
All her original brightness, nor appear'd  
Less than Arch-angel ruin'd, and th' excess

*Small infantry*, A small people, 13½ inches high, said by Homer to live on the shores of the Ocean and to be attacked by cranes in the springtime.

*Phlegra*, Part of Macedonia, where the Centaurs, half men, half horses, were supposed to have lived.

*Thebes*. The gods were said to have joined in the battles at Thebes and at *Ilium* (Troy).

*Uther's son*, King Arthur, son of Uther Pendragon.

*Armoric*, Of Brittany (Armorica).

*Aspramont*. These names belong to the romances of Charlemagne, the Frankish Emperor. *Aspramont* is in Limburg ; *Montalban* (Montauban), in the south of France ; *Damasco*, Damascus ; *Trebisond*, in Cappadocia, Asia Minor ; *Biserta*, in Tunis, North Africa ; and *Fontarabia*, in the Pyrenees, where, Roland and his knights were defeated and Roland killed, at Roncesvalles. Charlemagne was not defeated in this battle, as Milton suggests.



## A Shorter Milton

Of glory obscur'd : as when the sun new ris'n  
Looks through the horizontal misty air,  
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon  
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the nations, and with fear of change  
Perplexes monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shone  
Above them all th' Arch-angel : but his face  
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care  
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows  
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride  
Waiting revenge : cruel his eye, but cast  
Signs of remorse and passion to behold  
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather  
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd  
For ever now to have their lot in pain,  
Millions of spirits for his fault amerc'd  
Of Heav'n, and from eternal splendours flung  
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,  
Their glory wither'd. As when Heaven's fire  
Hath scath'd the forest oaks or mountain pines,  
With singed top their stately growth though bare  
Stands on the blasted heath. He now prepar'd  
To speak ; whereat their doubl'd ranks they bend  
From wing to wing, and half inclose him round  
With all his peers : attention held them mute.  
Thrice he essay'd, and thrice in spite of scorn,  
Tears such as angels weep, burst forth : at last  
Words interwove with sighs found out their way.

' O myriads of immortal spirits, O Powers  
Matchless, but with th' Almighty, and that strife  
Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,  
As this place testifies, and this dire change  
Hateful to utter : but what power of mind  
Foreseeing or presaging, from the depth  
Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd,

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

How such united force of gods, how such  
As stood like these, could ever know repulse ?  
For who can yet believe, though after loss,  
That all these puissant legions, whose exile  
Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to reascend  
Self-rais'd, and repossess their native seat ?  
For me, be witness all the host of Heav'n,  
If counsels different, or danger shunn'd  
By me have lost our hopes. But he who reigns  
Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure  
Sat on his throne, upheld by old repute,  
Consent or custom, and his regal state  
Put forth at full, but still his strength conceal'd,  
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our  
fall.

Henceforth his might we know, and know our  
own

So as not either to provoke, or dread  
New war, provok'd ; our better part remains  
To work in close design, by fraud or guile  
What force effected not : that he no less  
At length from us may find, who overcomes  
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.  
Space may produce new worlds ; whereof so rife  
There went a fame in Heav'n that he ere long  
Intended to create, and therein plant  
A generation, whom his choice regard  
Should favour equal to the sons of Heaven :  
Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps  
Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere :  
For this infernal pit shall never hold  
Celestial spirits in bondage, nor th' Abyss  
Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts  
Full counsel must mature : peace is despair'd,  
For who can think submission ! war then, war

## A Shorter Milton

Open or understood, must be resolv'd.'

He spake : and to confirm his words, outflew  
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the  
                  thighs

Of mighty Cherubim ; the sudden blaze  
Far round illumin'd hell : highly they rag'd  
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped  
                  arms

Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war,  
Hurling defiance toward the vault of Heav'n.

There stood a hill not far whose grisly top  
Belch'd fire and rolling smoke ; the rest entire  
Shone with a glossy scurf, undoubted sign  
That in his womb was hid metallic ore,  
The work of sulphur. Thither wing'd with speed  
A numerous brigade hasten'd. As when bands  
Of pioneers with spade and pickaxe arm'd  
Forerun the royal camp, to trench a field,  
Or cast a rampart. Mammon led them on,  
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell  
From Heav'n, for ev'n in Heav'n his looks and  
                  thoughts

Were always downward bent, admiring more  
The riches of Heav'n's pavement, trodd'n gold,  
Than aught divine or holy else enjoy'd  
In vision beatific : by him first  
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,  
Ransack'd the centre, and with impious hands  
Rifl'd the bowels of their mother earth  
For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew  
Op'n'd into the hill a spacious wound,  
And digg'd out ribs of gold. Let none admire  
That riches grow in Hell ; that soil may best  
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those  
Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,  
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,  
And strength and art are easily outdone  
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour  
What in an age they with incessant toil  
And hands innumerable scarce perform.  
Nigh on the plain in many cells prepar'd,  
That underneath had veins of liquid fire  
Sluic'd from the lake, a second multitude  
With wond'rous art founded the massy ore,  
Severing each kind, and scumm'd the bullion  
dross :

A third as soon had form'd within the ground  
A various mould, and from the boiling cells  
By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,  
As in an organ from one blast of wind  
To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.  
Anon out of the earth a fabric huge  
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound  
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,  
Built like a temple, where pilasters round  
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid  
With golden architrave ; nor did there want  
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures grav'n,  
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,  
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence  
Equall'd in all their glories, to inshrine  
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat  
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove

*Works of Memphian kings*, The pyramids of ancient Egypt.

*Pilasters*, Flat pillars, sunk in the walls of the building.

*Doric*, The oldest and simplest of the Greek styles of architecture.

*Alcairo*. Milton implies a city of Egypt, probably Memphis, since Cairo was not built till the tenth century A.D.

*Belus*, The reputed founder of Babylon.

*Serapis*, The god of the Nile and of fertility.

## A Shorter Milton

In wealth and luxury. Th' ascending pile  
Stood fixt her stately highth, and straight the  
doors

Op'ning their brazen folds discover wide  
Within, her ample spaces, o'er the smooth  
And level pavement : from the arched roof  
Pendent by subtle magic many a row  
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets fed  
With naphtha and asphaltus yielded light  
As from a sky. The hasty multitude  
Admiring enter'd, and the work some praise  
And some the architect : his hand was known  
In Heav'n by many a tow'rd structure high,  
Where sceptr'd angels held their residence,  
And sat as princes, whom the supreme King  
Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,  
Each in his hierarchy, the orders bright.  
Nor was his name unheard or unador'd  
In ancient Greece ; and in Ausonian land  
Men called him Mulciber ; and how he fell  
From Heav'n they fabl'd, thrown by angry Jove  
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements : from morn  
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,  
A summer's day ; and with the setting sun  
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star,  
On Lemnos th' Ægean isle : thus they relate,  
Erring ; for he with this rebellious rout  
Fell long before ; nor aught avail'd him now  
To have built in Heav'n high towers ; nor did he  
'scape  
By all his engines, but was headlong sent

*Cresset*, A kind of lamp, consisting of an iron cage, in which coils of rope, impregnated with tar or grease, were burned.

*Mulciber*. Milton so designates Vulcan, god of fire, who built all the palaces of the gods on Olympus. *Engines*, Contrivances.

## Paradise Lost.—Book I

With his industrious crew to build in hell.

Meanwhile the winged heralds by command  
Of sovran power, with awful ceremony  
And trumpets' sound throughout the host proclaim

A solemn council forthwith to be held  
At Pandæmonium, the high capital  
Of Satan and his peers : their summons call'd  
From every band and squared regiment  
By place or choice the worthiest ; they anon  
With hundreds and with thousands trooping  
came

Attended : all access was throng'd, the gates  
And porches wide, but chief the spacious hall  
(Though like a cover'd field, where champions  
bold

Wont ride in arm'd, and at the Soldan's chair  
Defi'd the best of Panim chivalry  
To mortal combat or career with lance)  
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,  
Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees  
In spring time, when the sun with Taurus rides,  
Pour forth their populous youth about the hive  
In clusters ; they among fresh dewes and flowers  
Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed plank,  
The suburb of their straw-built citadel,  
New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer  
Their state affairs. So thick the aery crowd  
Swarm'd and were straiten'd ; till the signal  
giv'n,

Behold a wonder ! they but now who seem'd

*Panim*, Saracen.

*Career with lance*, Tournament in which the aim of the combatants was only to break a lance ; not mortal combat.

*With Taurus rides*. Is in the constellation of the Bull, one of the signs of the Zodiac.

## A Shorter Milton

In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,  
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room  
Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race  
Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves,  
Whose midnight revels, by a forest side  
Or fountain some belated peasant sees,  
Or dreams he sees, while over head the moon  
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth  
Wheels her pale course, they on their mirth and  
dance

Intent, with jocund music charm his ear ;  
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.  
Thus incorporeal spirits to smallest forms  
Reduc'd their shapes immense, and were at large,  
Though without number still amidst the hall  
Of that infernal court. But far within,  
And in their own dimensions like themselves  
The great Seraphic lords and Cherubim  
In close recess and secret conclave sat,  
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,  
Frequent and full. After short silence then  
And summons read, the great consult began.

*The Indian mount*, Imaus, the western Himalayas.  
*Frequent*, Numerous.

# PARADISE LOST

## *Book II*

### THE ARGUMENT

THE consultation begun, Satan debates whether another battle be to be hazarded for the recovery of Heaven: some advise it, others dissuade: a third proposal is preferred, mentioned before by Satan, to search the truth of that prophecy or tradition in heaven concerning another world, and another kind of creature equal or not much inferior to themselves, about this time to be created: their doubt who shall be sent on this difficult search: Satan their chief undertakes alone the voyage, is honoured and applauded. The council thus ended, the rest betake them several ways and to several employments, as their inclinations lead them, to entertain the time till Satan return. He passes on his journey to Hell gates, finds them shut, and who sat there to guard them, by whom at length they are opened, and discover to him the great gulf between Hell and Heaven; with what difficulty he passes through, directed by Chaos, the Power of that place, to the sight of this new world which he sought.

HIGH on a throne of royal state, which far  
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,  
Or where the gorgeous east with richest hand  
Show'rs on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,  
Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd  
To that bad eminence; and from despair  
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires

*Ormuz*, An island in the Persian Gulf.



## A Shorter Milton

Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue  
Vain war with Heav'n, and by success untaught  
His proud imaginations thus displayed.

' Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heav'n,  
For since no deep within her gulf can hold  
Immortal vigour, though oppress'd and fall'n,  
I give not Heav'n for lost. From this descent  
Celestial virtues rising, will appear  
More glorious and more dread than from no fall,  
And trust themselves to fear no second fate :  
Me though just right, and the fixed laws of Heav'n  
Did first create your leader, next free choice,  
With what besides, in council or in fight,  
Hath been achiev'd of merit, yet this loss  
Thus far at least recover'd, hath much more  
Establish'd in a safe unenvied throne  
Yielded with full consent. The happier state  
In Heav'n, which follows dignity, might draw  
Envy from each inferior ; but who here  
Will envy whom the highest place exposes  
Foremost to stand against the Thunderer's aim  
Your bulwark, and condemns to greatest share  
Of endless pain ? Where there is then no good  
For which to strive, no strife can grow up there  
From faction ; for none sure will claim in Hell  
Precedence, none, whose portion is so small  
Of present pain, that with ambitious mind  
Will covet more. With this advantage then  
To union, and firm faith, and firm accord,  
More than can be in Heav'n, we now return  
To claim our just inheritance of old,  
Surer to prosper than prosperity  
Could have assur'd us ; and by what best way,  
Whether of open war or covert guile,  
We now debate ; who can advise, may speak.'

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

He ceas'd, and next him Moloch, scepter'd king,  
Stood up, the strongest and the fiercest spirit  
That fought in Heav'n, now fiercer by despair :  
His trust was with th' Eternal to be deem'd  
Equal in strength, and rather than be less  
Car'd not to be at all ; with that care lost  
Went all his fear : of God, or Hell, or worse  
He reck'd not, and these words thereafter spake :

' My sentence is for open war : of wiles,  
More unexpert, I boast not : them let those  
Contrive who need, or when they need, not now.  
For while they sit contriving, shall the rest,  
Millions that stand in arms, and longing wait  
The signal to ascend, sit ling'ring here  
Heav'n's fugitives, and for their dwelling-place  
Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,  
The prison of his tyranny who reigns  
By our delay ? no, let us rather choose  
Arm'd with hell flames and fury all at once  
O'er Heav'n's high towers to force resistless way,  
Turning our tortures into horrid arms  
Against the torturer ; when to meet the noise  
Of his almighty engine he shall hear  
Infernal thunder, and for lightning see  
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage  
Among his angels ; and his throne itself  
Mixt with Tartarean sulphur, and strange fire,  
His own invented torments. But perhaps  
The way seems difficult and steep to scale  
With upright wing against a higher foe.  
Let such bethink them, if the sleepy drench  
Of that forgetful lake benumb not still,  
That in our proper motion we ascend  
Up to our native seat : descent and fall  
To us is adverse. Who but felt of late

## A Shorter Milton

When the fierce foe hung on our brok'n rear  
Insulting, and pursu'd us through the deep,  
With what compulsion and laborious flight  
We sunk thus low ? Th' ascent is easy then ;  
Th' event is fear'd ; should we again provoke  
Our stronger, some worse way his wrath may find  
To our destruction : if there be in Hell  
Fear to be worse destroy'd : what can be worse  
Than to dwell here, driv'n out from bliss, condemn'd

In this abhorred deep to utter woe ;  
Where pain of unextinguishable fire  
Must exercise us without hope of end  
The vassals of his anger, when the scourge  
Inexorably, and the torturing hour  
Call us to penance ? More destroy'd than thus  
We should be quite abolish'd and expire.  
What fear we then ? what doubt we to incense  
His utmost ire ? which, to the highth enrag'd,  
Will either quite consume us, and reduce  
To nothing this essential, happier far  
Than miserable to have eternal being :  
Or if our substance be indeed divine,  
And cannot cease to be, we are at worst  
On this side nothing ; and by proof we feel  
Our power sufficient to disturb his Heav'n,  
And with perpetual inroads to alarm,  
Though inaccessible, his fatal throne :  
Which, if not victory is yet revenge.'

He ended frowning, and his look denounc'd  
Desperate revenge, and battle dangerous  
To less than gods. On th'other side up rose  
Belial, in act more graceful and humane ;  
A fairer person lost not Heav'n ; he seem'd  
For dignity compos'd and high exploit :

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

But all was false and hollow ; though his tongue  
Dropp'd manna, and could make the worse appear  
The better reason, to perplex and dash  
Maturest counsels : for his thoughts were low ;  
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds  
Timorous and slothful : yet he pleas'd the ear,  
And with persuasive accent thus began.

' I should be much for open war, O Peers,  
As not behind in hate ; if what was urg'd  
Main reason to persuade immediate war,  
Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast  
Ominous conjecture on the whole success :  
When he who most excels in fact of arms,  
In what he counsels and in what excels  
Mistrustful, grounds his courage on despair  
And utter dissolution, as the scope  
Of all his aim, after some dire revenge.  
First, what revenge ? the tow'rs of Heav'n are  
fill'd

With armed watch, that render all access  
Impregnable ; oft on the bordering deep  
Encamp their legions, or with obscure wing  
Scout far and wide into the realm of night,  
Scorning surprise. Or could we break our way  
By force, and at our heels all Hell should rise  
With blackest insurrection, to confound  
Heav'n's purest light, yet our great Enemy  
All incorruptible would on his throne  
Sit unpolluted, and th' ethereal mould  
Incapable of stain would soon expel  
Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire  
Victorious. Thus repuls'd, our final hope  
Is flat despair ; we must exasperate  
Th' Almighty Victor to spend all his rage,  
And that must end us, that must be our cure,

## A Shorter Milton

To be no more ; sad cure ; for who would lose,  
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,  
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,  
To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost  
In the wide womb of uncreated night,  
Devoid of sense and motion ? and who knows,  
Let this be good, whether our angry Foe  
Can give it, or will ever ? how he can  
Is doubtful ; that he never will is sure.  
Will he, so wise, let loose at once his ire,  
Belike through impotence, or unaware,  
To give his enemies their wish, and end  
Them in his anger, whom his anger saves  
To punish endless ? wherefore cease we then ?  
Say they who counsel war, we are decreed,  
Reserv'd and destin'd to eternal woe ;  
Whatever doing, what can we suffer more,  
What can we suffer worse ? is this then worst,  
Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms ?  
What when we fled amain, pursu'd and struck  
With Heav'n's afflicting thunder, and besought  
The deep to shelter us ? this Hell then seem'd  
A refuge from those wounds : or when we lay  
Chain'd on the burning lake ? that sure was  
worse.

What if the breath that kindl'd those grim fires  
Awak'd should blow them into sevenfold rage  
And plunge us in the flames ? or from above  
Should intermitted vengeance arm again  
His red right hand to plague us ? what if all  
Her stores were op'n'd, and this firmament  
Of Hell should spout her cataracts of fire,  
Impendent horrors, threat'ning hideous fall  
One day upon our heads ; while we perhaps  
Designing or exhorting glorious war,

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Caught in a fiery tempest shall be hurl'd  
Each on his rock transfix'd, the sport and prey  
Of racking whirlwinds, or for ever sunk  
Under yon boiling ocean, wrapt in chains ;  
There to converse with everlasting groans,  
Unrespited, unpitied, unrepriev'd,  
Ages of hopeless end ; this would be worse.  
War therefore, open or conceal'd, alike  
My voice dissuades ; for what can force or guile  
With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye  
Views all things at one view ? he from Heav'n's  
          highth

All these our motions vain, sees and derides ;  
Not more almighty to resist our might,  
Than wise to frustrate all our plots and wiles.  
Shall we then live thus vile, the race of Heav'n  
Thus traml'd, thus expell'd to suffer here  
Chains and these torments ? better these than  
          worse

By my advice ; since fate inevitable  
Subdues us, and omnipotent decree  
The Victor's will. To suffer, as to do,  
Our strength is equal, nor the law unjust  
That so ordains : this was at first resolv'd,  
If we were wise, against so great a foe  
Contending, and so doubtful what might fall.  
I laugh, when those who at the spear are bold  
And vent'rous, if that fail them, shrink and fear  
What yet they know must follow, to endure  
Exile, or ignominy, or bonds, or pain,  
The sentence of their conqueror : this is now  
Our doom ; which if we can sustain and bear,  
Our supreme Foe in time may much remit  
His anger, and perhaps thus far remov'd  
Not mind us not offending, satisfi'd

## A Shorter Milton

With what is punish'd ; whence these raging fires  
Will slack'n, if his breath stir not their flames.  
Our purer essence then will overcome  
Their noxious vapour, or enur'd not feel,  
Or chang'd at length, and to the place conform'd  
In temper and in nature, will receive  
Familiar the fierce heat, and void of pain ;  
This horror will grow mild, this darkness light,  
Besides what hope the never-ending flight  
Of future days may bring, what chance, what  
change

Worth waiting, since our present lot appears  
For happy though but ill, for ill not worst,  
If we procure not to ourselves more woe.'

Thus Belial with words cloth'd in reason's garb  
Counsell'd ignoble ease, and peaceful sloth,  
Not peace : and after him thus Mammon spake :  
' ' Either to disenthroned the King of Heav'n  
We war, if war be best, or to regain  
Our own right lost : him to unthroned we then  
May hope, when everlasting Fate shall yield  
To fickle Chance, and Chaos judge the strife :  
The former vain to hope argues as vain  
The latter : for what place can be for us  
Within Heav'n's bound, unless Heav'n's Lord  
supreme

We overpower ? suppose he should relent  
And publish grace to all, on promise made  
Of new subjection ; with what eyes could we  
Stand in his presence humble, and receive  
Strict laws impos'd, to celebrate his throne  
With warbl'd hymns, and to his Godhead sing  
Forc'd hallelujahs ; while he lordly sits

*Hallelujah*, A Hebrew word meaning ' praise ye Jehovah.'

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Our envied Sovran, and his altar breathes  
Ambrosial odours and ambrosial flowers,  
Our servile offerings. This must be our task  
In Heav'n, this our delight ; how wearisome  
Eternity so spent in worship paid  
To whom we hate. Let us not then pursue  
By force impossible, by leave obtain'd  
Unacceptable, though in Heav'n, our state  
Of splendid vassalage, but rather seek  
Our own good from ourselves, and from our own  
Live to ourselves, though in this vast recess,  
Free, and to none accountable, preferring  
Hard liberty before the easy yoke  
Of servile pomp. Our greatness will appear  
Then most conspicuous, when great things of  
small,  
Useful of hurtful, prosperous of adverse  
We can create, and in what place so e'er  
Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain  
Through labour and endurance. This deep world  
Of darkness do we dread ? how oft amidst  
Thick clouds and dark doth Heav'n's all-ruling  
    . . . Sire  
Choose to reside, his glory unobscur'd,  
And with the majesty of darkness round  
Covers his throne ; from whence deep thunders  
    roar,  
Must ring their rage, and Heav'n resembles Hell ?  
As he our darkness, cannot we his light  
Imitate when we please ? this desert soil  
Wants not her hidden lustre, gems and gold ;  
Nor want we skill or art, from whence to raise  
Magnificence ; and what can Heav'n show more ?  
Our torments also may in length of time  
Become our elements, these piercing fires



## A Shorter Milton

As soft as now severe, our temper chang'd  
Into their temper ; which must needs remove  
The sensible of pain. All things invite  
To peaceful counsels, and the settl'd state  
Of order, how in safety best we may  
Compose our present evils, with regard  
Of what we are and where, dismissing quite  
All thoughts of war. Ye have what I advise.'

He scarce had finish'd, when such murmur  
fill'd  
Th' assembly, as when hollow rocks retain  
The sound of blust'ring winds, which all night  
long  
Had rous'd the sea, now with hoarse cadence lull  
Sea-faring men o'erwatch'd, whose bark by chance  
Or pinnacle anchors in a craggy bay  
After the tempest : such applause was heard  
As Mammon ended, and his sentence pleas'd,  
Advising peace : for such another field  
They dreaded worse than Hell : so much the fear  
Of thunder and the sword of Michael  
Wrought still within them ; and no less desire  
To found this nether empire, which might rise  
By policy, and long process of time,  
In emulation opposite to Heav'n.  
Which when Beëlzebub perceiv'd, than whom,  
Satan except, none higher sat, with grave  
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd  
A pillar of state ; deep on his front engraven  
Deliberation sat and public care ;  
And princely counsel in his face yet shone,  
Majestic though in ruin : sage he stood,  
With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear

*Atlantean*, The giant Atlas, who carried the sky and all the stars  
on his shoulders.

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

The weight of mightiest monarchies ; his look  
Drew audience and attention still as night  
Or summer's noon-tide air, while thus he spake.

‘ Thrones and imperial Powers, offspring of  
Heav’n,

Ethereal Virtues ; or these titles now  
Must we renounce, and changing style be call’d  
Princes of Hell ? for so the popular vote  
Inclines, here to continue, and build up here  
A growing empire ; doubtless ; while we dream,  
And know not that the King of Heav’n hath  
doom’d

This place our dungeon, not our safe retreat  
Beyond his potent arm, to live exempt  
From Heav’n’s high jurisdiction, in new league  
Banded against his throne, but to remain  
In strictest bondage, though thus far remov’d,  
Under th’ inevitable curb, reserv’d

His captive multitude : for he, be sure,  
In highth or depth, still first and last will reign  
Sole King, and of his kingdom lose no part  
By our revolt, but over Hell extend

His empire, and with iron sceptre rule  
Us here, as with his golden those in Heav’n.

What sit we then projecting peace and war ?

War hath determin’d us, and foil’d with loss  
Irreparable ; terms of peace yet none

Vouchsaf’d or sought ; for what peace will be  
giv’n

To us enslav’d, but custody severe,

And stripes, and arbitrary punishment

Inflicted ? and what peace can we return,

But to our power hostility and hate,

Untam’d reluctance, and revenge though slow,

Yet ever plotting how the conqueror least

## A Shorter Milton

May reap his conquest, and may least rejoice  
In doing what we most in suffering feel ?  
Nor will occasion want, nor shall we need  
With dangerous expedition to invade  
Heav'n, whose high walls fear no assault or siege,  
Or ambush from the deep. What if we find  
Some easier enterprise ? There is a place  
(If ancient and prophetic fame in Heav'n  
Err not) another world, the happy seat  
Of some new race call'd Man, about this time  
To be created like to us, though less  
In power and excellence, but favour'd more  
Of him who rules above ; so was his will  
Pronounc'd among the gods, and by an oath,  
That shook Heav'n's whole circumference, confirm'd.

Thither let us bend all our thoughts, to learn  
What creatures there inhabit, of what mould  
Or substance, how endu'd, and what their power,  
And where their weakness, how attempted best,  
By force or subtlety : though Heav'n be shut,  
And Heav'n's high Arbitrator sit secure  
In his own strength, this place may lie expos'd,  
The utmost border of his kingdom, left  
To their defence who hold it : here perhaps  
Some advantageous act may be achiev'd  
By sudden onset, either with Hell fire  
To waste his whole creation, or possess  
All as our own, and drive as we were driven,  
The puny habitants, or if not drive,  
Seduce them to our party, that their God  
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand  
Abolish his own works. This would surpass

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Common revenge, and interrupt his joy  
In our confusion, and our joy upraise  
In his disturbance ; when his darling sons  
Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse  
Their frail originals, and faded bliss,  
Faded so soon. Advise if this be worth  
Attempting, or to sit in darkness here  
Hatching vain empires.' Thus Beëlzebub  
Pleaded his devilish counsel, first devis'd  
By Satan, and in part propos'd : for whence,  
But from the author of all ill could spring  
So deep a malice, to confound the race  
Of mankind in one root, and Earth with Hell  
To mingle and involve, done all to spite  
The great Creator ? but their spite still serves  
His glory to augment. The bold design  
Pleas'd highly those infernal states, and joy  
Sparkl'd in all their eyes ; with full assent  
They vote : whereat his speech he thus renews.

' Well have ye judg'd, well ended long debate,  
Synod of gods, and like to what ye are,  
Great things resolv'd ; which from the lowest  
    . . . deep

Will once more lift us up, in spite of fate,  
Nearer our ancient seat ; perhaps in view  
Of those bright confines, whence with neighbour-  
    ing arms

And opportune excursion we may chance  
Re-enter Heav'n ; or else in some mild zone  
Dwell not unvisited of Heav'n's fair light  
Secure, and at the brightening orient beam  
Purge off this gloom ; the soft delicious air,  
To heal the scar of these corrosive fires  
Shall breathe her balm. But first whom shall we  
    send

## A Shorter Milton

In search of this new world, whom shall we find  
Sufficient ? who shall tempt with wand'ring feet  
The dark unbottom'd infinite abyss  
And through the palpable obscure find out  
His uncouth way, or spread his aery flight  
Upborne with indefatigable wings  
Over the vast abrupt, ere he arrive  
The happy isle ; what strength, what art can  
then

Suffice, or what evasion bear him safe  
Through the strict senteries and stations thick  
Of angels watching round ? Here he had need  
All circumspection, and we now no less  
Choice in our suffrage ; for on whom we send,  
The weight of all and our last hope relies.'

This said, he sat ; and expectation held  
His look suspense, awaiting who appear'd  
To second, or oppose, or undertake  
The perilous attempt ; but all sat mute,  
Pondering the danger with deep thoughts ; and  
each

In others' count'nance read his own dismay  
Astonish'd : none among the choice and prime  
Of those Heav'n-warring champions could be  
found

So hardy as to proffer or accept  
Alone the dreadful voyage ; till at last  
Satan, whom now transcendent glory rais'd  
Above his fellows, with monarchal pride  
Conscious of highest worth, unmov'd thus spake.

' O Progeny of Heav'n, empyreal Thrones,  
With reason hath deep silence and demur  
Seiz'd us, though undismay'd : long is the way  
And hard, that out of Hell leads up to light ;  
Our prison strong, this huge convex of fire,

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Outrageous to devour, immures us round  
Ninefold, and gates of burning adamant  
Barr'd over us prohibit all egress.  
These pass'd, if any pass, the void profound  
Of unessential night receives him next  
Wide gaping, and with utter loss of being  
Threatens him, plung'd in that abortive gulf.  
If thence he 'scape into whatever world,  
Or unknown region, what remains him less  
Than unknown dangers and as hard escape.  
But I should ill become this throne, O Peers,  
And this imperial sovranity, adorn'd  
With splendour, arm'd with power, if aught  
    propos'd  
And judg'd of public moment, in the shape  
Of difficulty or danger could deter  
Me from attempting. Wherefore do I assume  
These royalties, and not refuse to reign,  
Refusing to accept as great a share  
Of hazard as of honour, due alike  
To him who reigns, and so much to him due  
Of hazard more, as he above the rest  
High honour'd sits? Go therefore mighty  
    Powers,  
Terror of Heav'n, though fall'n; intend at home,  
While here shall be our home, what best may  
    ease  
The present misery, and render Hell  
More tolerable; if there be cure or charm  
To respite or deceive, or slack the pain  
Of this ill mansion: intermit no watch  
Against a wakeful foe, while I abroad  
Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek  
Deliverance for us all: this enterprise  
None shall partake with me.' Thus saying rose

## A Shorter Milton

The monarch, and prevented all reply,  
Prudent, lest from his resolution rais'd  
Others among the chief might offer now  
(Certain to be refus'd) what erst they fear'd ;  
And so refus'd might in opinion stand  
His rivals, winning cheap the high repute  
Which he through hazard huge must earn. But  
they

Dreaded not more th' adventure than his voice  
Forbidding ; and at once with him they rose :  
Their rising all at once was as the sound  
Of thunder heard remote. Towards him they  
bend

With awful reverence prone ; and as a god  
Extol him equal to the highest in Heav'n :  
Nor fail'd they to express how much they prais'd,  
That for the general safety he despis'd  
His own ; for neither do the spirits damn'd  
Lose all their virtue ; lest bad men should boast  
Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,  
Or close ambition varnish'd o'er with zeal.  
Thus they their doubtful consultations dark  
Ended rejoicing in their matchless chief :  
As when from mountain tops the dusky clouds  
Ascending, while the north wind sleeps, o'erspread  
Heav'n's cheerful face, the louring element  
Scowls o'er the dark'n'd landscape snow, or  
shower ;

If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet  
Extend his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,  
The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds  
Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.  
O shame to men ! devil with devil damn'd

*Prevented, Forestalled, anticipated.*

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Firm concord holds, men only disagree  
Of creatures rational, though under hope  
Of heavenly grace ; and God proclaiming peace,  
Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife  
Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,  
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy :  
As if (which might induce us to accord)  
Man had not hellish foes enow besides,  
That day and night for his destruction wait.

The Stygian council thus dissolv'd ; and forth  
In order came the grand infernal peers,  
Midst came their mighty Paramount, and seem'd  
Alone th' antagonist of Heav'n, nor less  
Than Hell's dread emperor with pomp supreme,  
And god-like imitated state ; him round  
A globe of fiery Seraphim inclos'd  
With bright emblazonry, and horrent arms.  
Then of their session ended they bid cry  
With trumpets' regal sound the great result :  
Toward the four winds four speedy Cherubim  
Put to their mouths the sounding alchemy  
By herald's voice explain'd : the hollow abyss  
Heard far and wide, and all the host of Hell  
With deaf'ning shout, return'd them loud acclaim.

Thence more at ease their minds and somewhat  
rais'd  
By false presumptuous hope, the ranged Powers  
Disband, and wand'ring, each his several way  
Pursues, as inclination or sad choice  
Leads him perplex'd, where he may likeliest find  
Truce to his restless thoughts, and entertain  
The irksome hours, till his great Chief return.  
Part on the plain, or in the air sublime

*Alchemy, Metal mixed with the chemist's skill.*



## A Shorter Milton

Upon the wing, or in swift race contend,  
As at th'Olympian games or Pythian fields ;  
Part curb their fiery steeds, or shun the goal  
With rapid wheels, or fronted brigades form.  
As when to warn proud cities war appears  
Wag'd in the troubl'd sky, and armies rush  
To battle in the clouds, before each van  
Prick forth the aery knights, and couch their  
                  spears  
Till thickest legions close ; with feats of arms  
From either end of Heav'n the welkin burns.  
Others with vast Typhœan rage more fell  
Rend up both rocks and hills, and ride the air  
In whirlwind ; Hell scarce holds the wild uproar.  
As when Alcides from Æchalia crown'd  
With conquest, felt th' envenom'd robe, and tore  
Through pain up by the roots Thessalian pines,  
And Lichas from the top of Oeta threw  
Into th' Euboic sea. Others more mild,  
Retreated in a silent valley, sing  
With notes angelical to many a harp  
Their own heroic deeds and hapless fall  
By doom of battle ; and complain that fate  
Free virtue should enthrall to force or chance.

*Olympian games.* The most famous athletic contests of ancient Greece were celebrated at Olympia.

*Pythian.* Other games were celebrated at Delphi, in honour of the god Apollo's victory over the Python, a monster, there.

*Typhœan.* Typhœus was a giant struck by lightning by Jupiter and buried under Mount Etna.

*Alcides,* Hercules, who married Deianira. She was attacked by the centaur Nessus, but Hercules shot him with an arrow. Deianira steeped a garment in the blood of Nessus, as she had been told that it would enable her to keep the love of her husband. She sent this garment to Hercules, but unfortunately his arrow had poisoned the blood ; so that when he put on the garment he suffered intense agonies, and in his rage threw the bearer, Lichas, into the sea.

*Æchalia,* A town in Eubœa, one of the larger Greek islands.

*Oeta,* A mountain in Greece to the west of the Euboic Gulf.

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Their song was partial, but the harmony  
(What could it less when spirits immortal sing ?)  
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment  
The thronging audience. In discourse more  
sweet

(For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense,)  
Others apart sat on a hill retir'd,  
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high  
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.  
Of good and evil much they argu'd then,  
Of happiness and final misery,  
Passion and apathy, and glory and shame,  
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy :  
Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm  
Pain for a while or anguish, and excite  
Fallacious hope, or arm th' obdured breast  
With stubborn patience as with triple steel.  
Another part in squadrons and gross bands  
On bold adventure to discover wide  
That dismal world, if any clime perhaps  
Might yield them easier habitation, bend  
Four ways their flying march, along the banks  
Of four infernal rivers that disgorge  
Into the burning lake their baleful streams ;  
Abhorred Styx the flood of deadly hate,  
Sad Acheron of sorrow, black and deep ;  
Cocytus, nam'd of lamentation loud  
Heard on the rueful stream ; fierce Phlegethon  
Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage.

*Styx*, The river which flowed seven times around the Underworld.  
*Acheron*, A river of the Underworld ; *Cocytus* flowed into it.  
*Phlegethon*, A river in the Underworld which ran with fire instead  
of water.

## A Shorter Milton

Far off from these a slow and silent stream,  
Lethe the river of oblivion rolls  
Her wat'ry labyrinth, whereof who drinks,  
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,  
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.  
Beyond this flood a frozen continent  
Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms  
Of whirlwind and dire hail, which on firm land  
Thaws not, but gathers heap, and ruin seems  
Of ancient pile ; all else deep snow and ice,  
A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog  
Betwixt Damiata and mount Casius old,  
Where armies whole have sunk : the parching air  
Burns froze, and cold performs th' effect of fire.  
Thither by harpy-footed Furies hal'd  
At certain revolutions all the damn'd  
Are brought : and feel by turns the bitter change  
Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more  
fierce,  
From beds of raging fire to starve in ice  
Their soft ethereal warmth, and there to pine  
Immovable, infix'd, and frozen round,  
Periods of time, thence hurried back to fire.  
They ferry over this Lethean sound  
Both to and fro, their sorrow to augment,  
And wish and struggle, as they pass, to reach  
The tempting stream, with one small drop to lose  
In sweet forgetfulness all pain and woe,  
All in one moment, and so near the brink ;

*Lethe*, A river of the Underworld ; the shades drank of its waters and forgot the past.

*Serbonian bog*, Lake Serbonis, between Mount Casius (near the isthmus of Suez) and the city of Damiata in Egypt. The sand blew across it and made land indistinguishable from water.

*Frore*, Frozen.

*Furies*, The three hideous daughters of Night, who punished the guilty, both in this world and the next.

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

But fate withstands, and to oppose th' attempt  
Medusa with Gorgonian terror guards  
The ford, and of itself the water flies  
All taste of living wight, as once it fled  
The lip of Tantalus. Thus roving on  
In confus'd march forlorn, th' adventurous bands  
With shudd'ring horror pale, and eyes aghast  
View'd first their lamentable lot, and found  
No rest : through many a dark and dreary vale  
They pass'd, and many a region dolorous,  
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,  
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades  
of death,

A universe of death, which God by curse  
Created evil, for evil only good,  
Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds,  
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,  
Abominable, inutterable, and worse  
Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd,  
Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimæras dire.

Meanwhile the adversary of God and Man,  
Satan with thoughts inflam'd of highest design,  
Puts on swift wings, and toward the gates of Hell  
Explores his solitary flight ; sometimes  
He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the  
left,

Now shaves with level wing the deep, then soars  
Up to the fiery concave towering high.  
As when far off at sea a fleet descri'd

*Medusa*, One of the Gorgons (see note on page 78).

*Tantalus*, Son of Jupiter, who, for revealing his father's secrets, was afflicted with a terrible thirst and doomed to stand up to the chin in water, which receded when he tried to drink. (Hence our word *tantalize*.)

*Gorgons*. See note on page 78.

*Hydras*. See note on page 55.

*Chimæra*, A fire-breathing monster, partly a lion, partly a dragon, and partly a goat, slain by Bellerophon.

## A Shorter Milton

Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds  
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles  
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring  
Their spicy drugs : they on the trading flood  
Through the wide Æthiopian to the Cape  
Ply stemming nightly toward the pole. So  
seem'd

Far off the flying fiend : at last appear  
Hell bounds high reaching to the horrid roof,  
And thrice threefold the gates ; three folds were  
brass,

Three iron, three of adamantine rock,  
Impenetrable, impal'd with circling fire,  
Yet unconsum'd. Before the gates there sat  
On either side a formidable shape ;  
The one seem'd woman to the waist, and fair,  
But ended foul in many a scaly fold,  
Voluminous and vast, a serpent arm'd  
With mortal sting : about her middle round  
A cry of hell hounds never ceasing bark'd  
With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung  
A hideous peal : yet, when they list, would creep,  
If aught disturb'd their noise, into her womb,  
And kennel there, yet there still bark'd and  
howl'd

Within unseen. Far less abhorr'd than these  
Vex'd Scylla bathing in the sea that parts  
Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore :  
Nor uglier follow the Night-hag, when call'd

*Bengala*, Bengal, in North-East India.

*Ternate and Tidore*, Two of the Spice Islands, or Moluccas, to the east of Celebes. The Dutch brought nutmeg and mace from them to Europe.

*Scylla*, A monster who lived in the sea between Italy and Sicily.

*Calabria*, The south-western peninsula of Italy.

*Trinacria*, Sicily ; the word means ' with three promontories.'

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

In secret, riding through the air she comes  
Lur'd with the smell of infant blood, to dance  
With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon  
Eclipses at their charms. The other shape,  
If shape it might be call'd that shape had none  
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,  
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,  
For each seem'd either ; black it stood as night,  
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as Hell,  
And shook a dreadful dart ; what seem'd his  
head

The likeness of a kingly crown had on.  
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat  
The monster moving onward came as fast,  
With horrid strides, Hell trembled as he strode.  
Th' undaunted fiend what this might be admir'd,  
Admir'd, not fear'd ; God and his Son except,  
Created thing naught valu'd he nor shunn'd ;  
And with disdainful look thus first began.

' Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,  
That dar'st, though grim and terrible, advance  
Thy miscreated front athwart my way  
To yonder gates ? through them I mean to pass,  
That be assured, without leave ask'd of thee :  
Retire, or taste thy folly, and learn by proof,  
Hell-born, not to contend with spirits of Heav'n.'

To whom the goblin full of wrath reply'd,  
' Art thou that traitor angel, art thou he,  
Who first broke peace in Heav'n and faith, till  
then

Unbrok'n, and in proud rebellious arms  
Drew after him the third part of Heav'n's sons  
Conjur'd against the Highest, for which both thou

*Lapland.* There was supposed to be a horror and a harshness in  
the music of Lapland dances. *Labouring,* In her phases.

## A Shorter Milton

And they outcast from God, are here condemn'd  
To waste eternal days in woe and pain ?  
And reck'n'st thou thyself with spirits of Heav'n,  
Hell-doom'd, and breath'st defiance here and  
scorn,  
Where I reign king, and to enrage thee more,  
Thy king and lord ? Back to thy punishment,  
False fugitive, and to thy speed add wings,  
Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue  
Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart  
Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt  
before.'

So spake the grisly terror, and in shape,  
So speaking and so threat'ning, grew tenfold  
More dreadful and deform : on th' other side  
Incens'd with indignation Satan stood  
Unterrifi'd, and like a comet burn'd,  
That fires the length of Ophiucus huge  
In th' arctic sky, and from his horrid hair  
Shakes pestilence and war. Each at the head  
Levell'd his deadly aim ; their fatal hands  
No second stroke intend, and such a frown  
Each cast at th' other, as when two black clouds  
With Heav'n's artillery fraught, come rattling on  
Over the Caspian, then stand front to front  
Hov'ring a space, till winds the signal blow  
To join their dark encounter in mid air :  
So frown'd the mighty combatants, that Hell  
Grew darker at their frown, so match'd they  
stood ;  
For never but once more was either like  
To meet so great a foe : and now great deeds  
Had been achiev'd, whereof all hell had rung,

*Ophiucus*, The Serpent Holder, a constellation of the stars, forty degrees of the arc of the sky in length.

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Had not the snaky sorceress that sat  
Fast by hell gate, and kept the fatal key,  
Ris'n, and with hideous outcry rush'd between.  
' O father, what intends thy hand,' she cry'd,  
' Against thy only son ? What fury O son,  
Possesses thee to bend that mortal dart  
Against thy father's head ? and know'st for  
whom ;

For him who sits above and laughs the while  
At thee ordain'd his drudge, to execute  
Whate'er his wrath, which he calls justice, bids,  
His wrath which one day will destroy ye both.'

She spake, and at her words the hellish pest  
Forbore, then these to her Satan return'd :

' So strange thy outcry, and thy words so  
strange

Thou interposest, that my sudden hand  
Prevented spares to tell thee yet by deeds  
What it intends ; till first I know of thee,  
What thing thou art, thus double-form'd, and  
why

In this infernal vale first met thou call'st  
Me father, and that phantasm call'st my son ?  
I know thee not, nor ever saw till now  
Sight more detestable than him and thee.'

T' whom thus the portress of Hell gate reply'd ;  
' Hast thou forgot me then, and do I seem  
Now in thine eye so foul, once deem'd so fair  
In Heav'n, when at th' assembly, and in sight  
Of all the Seraphim with thee combin'd  
In bold conspiracy against Heav'n's King,  
All on a sudden miserable pain  
Surpris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum  
In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast  
Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,



## A Shorter Milton

Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,  
Then shining heav'nly fair, a goddess arm'd  
Out of thy head I sprung ; amazement seiz'd  
All the host of Heav'n ; back they recoil'd afraid  
At first, and call'd me Sin, and for a sign  
Portentous held me ; but familiar grown,  
I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won  
The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft  
Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing  
Becam'st enamour'd, and such joy thou took'st  
With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd  
A growing burden. Meanwhile war arose,  
And fields were fought in Heav'n ; wherein remain'd

(For what could else) to our Almighty Foe  
Clear victory, to our part loss and rout  
Through all the empyrean : down they fell  
Driv'n headlong from the pitch of Heaven, down  
Into this deep, and in the general fall  
I also ; at which time this powerful key  
Into my hand was giv'n, with charge to keep  
These gates for ever shut, which none can pass  
Without my op'ning. Pensive here I sat  
Alone, but long I sat not, till my womb  
Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown  
Prodigious motion felt in rueful throes.  
At last this odious offspring whom thou seest  
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way  
Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain  
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew  
Transform'd : but he my inbred enemy  
Forth issu'd, brandishing his fatal dart  
Made to destroy : I fled, and cry'd out " Death ; "  
Hell trembl'd at the hideous name, and sigh'd  
From all her caves, and back resounded " Death."

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

I fled, but he pursu'd (though more, it seems,  
Inflam'd with lust than rage) and swifter far,  
Me overtook his mother all dismay'd,  
And in embraces forcible and foul  
Ingend'ring with me, of that rape begot  
These yelling monsters that with ceaseless cry  
Surround me, as thou saw'st, hourly conceiv'd  
And hourly born, with sorrow infinite  
To me, for when they list into the womb  
That bred them they return, and howl and gnaw  
My bowels, their repast ; then bursting forth  
Afresh with conscious terrors vex me round,  
That rest or intermission none I find.  
Before mine eyes in opposition sits  
Grim Death my son and foe, who sets them on,  
And me his parent would full soon devour  
For want of other prey, but that he knows  
His end with mine involv'd ; and knows that I  
Should prove a bitter morsel, and his bane,  
Whenever that shall be ; so Fate pronounc'd.  
But thou O father, I forewarn thee, shun  
His deadly arrow ; neither vainly hope  
To be invulnerable in those bright arms,  
Though temper'd heav'nly, for that mortal dint,  
Save he who reigns above, none can resist.'

She finish'd, and the subtle fiend his lore  
Soon learn'd, now milder, and thus answer'd  
smooth.

' Dear daughter, since thou claim'st me for  
thy sire,  
And my fair son here show'st me, the dear pledge  
Of dalliance had with thee in Heav'n, and joys  
Then sweet, now sad to mention, through dire  
change

## A Shorter Milton

Befall'n us unforeseen, unthought of, know  
I come no enemy, but to set free  
From out this dark and dismal house of pain,  
Both him and thee, and all the heav'nly host  
Of spirits that in our just pretences arm'd  
Fell with us from on high : from them I go  
This uncouth errand sole, and one for all  
Myself expose, with lonely steps to tread  
Th' unfounded deep, and through the void  
immense

To search with wand'ring quest a place foretold  
Should be, and, by concurring signs, ere now  
Created vast and round, a place of bliss  
In the purlieus of Heav'n, and therein plac'd  
A race of upstart creatures, to supply  
Perhaps our vacant room, though more remov'd,  
Lest Heav'n surcharg'd with potent multitude  
Might hap to move new broils : be this or aught  
Than this more secret now design'd, I haste  
To know, and this once known, shall soon return,  
And bring ye to the place where thou and Death  
Shall dwell at ease, and up and down unseen  
Wing silently the buxom air, imbalm'd  
With odours ; there ye shall be fed and fill'd  
Immeasurably, all things shall be your prey.'

He ceas'd, for both seem'd highly pleas'd, and  
Death

Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile, to hear  
His famine should be fill'd, and blest his maw  
Destin'd to that good hour : no less rejoic'd  
His mother bad, and thus bespake her sire.

' The key of this infernal pit by due,  
And by command of Heav'n's all-powerful King  
I keep, by him forbidden to unlock  
These adamantine gates ; against all force

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Death ready stands to interpose his dart,  
Fearless to be o'ermatch'd by living might.  
But what owe I to his commands above  
Who hates me, and hath hither thrust me down  
Into this gloom of Tartarus profound,  
To sit in hateful office here confin'd,  
Inhabitant of Heav'n, and heav'nly-born,  
Here in perpetual agony and pain,  
With terrors and with clamours compass'd round  
Of mine own brood, that on my bowels feed :  
Thou art my father, thou my author, thou  
My being gav'st me ; whom should I obey  
But thee, whom follow ? thou wilt bring me soon  
To that new world of light and bliss, among  
The gods who live at ease, where I shall reign  
At thy right hand voluptuous, as beseems  
Thy daughter and thy darling, without end.'

Thus saying, from her side the fatal key,  
Sad instrument of all our woe, she took ;  
And towards the gate rolling her bestial train,  
Forthwith the huge portcullis high up drew,  
Which but herself not all the Stygian powers  
Could once have mov'd ; then in the keyhole  
turns

Th' intricate wards, and every bolt and bar  
Of massy iron or solid rock with ease  
Unfastens : on a sudden open fly  
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound  
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate  
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook  
Of Erebus. She open'd, but to shut  
Excell'd her power ; the gates wide open stood,  
That with extended wings a banner'd host

*Erebus, The lower world.*

## A Shorter Milton

Under spread ensigns marching might pass  
through  
With horse and chariots ranked in loose array ;  
So wide they stood, and like a furnace mouth  
Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame.  
Before their eyes in sudden view appear  
The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark  
Illimitable ocean without bound,  
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and  
highth,  
And time and place are lost ; where eldest Night  
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold  
Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise  
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.  
For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions  
fierce  
Strive here for mast'ry, and to battle bring  
Their embryon atoms ; they around the flag  
Of each his faction, in their several clans,  
Light-arm'd or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift or  
slow,  
Swarm populous, unnumber'd as the sands  
Of Barca or Cyrene's torrid soil,  
Levied to side with warring winds, and poise  
Their lighter wings. To whom these most adhere,  
He rules a moment ; Chaos umpire sits,  
And by decision more imbroils the fray  
By which he reigns : next him high arbiter  
Chance governs all. Into this wild abyss,  
The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,  
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,  
But all these in their pregnant causes mix'd  
Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight,

*Redounding, Curling like waves.*

*Barca and Cyrene, Cities of Africa to the west of Egypt.*

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

Unless th' Almighty Maker them ordain  
His dark materials to create more worlds,  
Into this wild abyss the wary fiend  
Stood on the brink of Hell and look'd a while,  
Pondering his voyage : for no narrow frith  
He had to cross. Nor was his ear less peal'd  
With noises loud and ruinous (to compare  
Great things with small) than when Bellona  
                  storms,  
With all her battering engines bent to rase  
Some capital city, or less than if this frame  
Of Heav'n were falling, and these elements  
In mutiny had from her axle torn  
The steadfast earth. At last his sail-broad  
                  vanes  
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke  
Uplifted spurns the ground ; thence many a  
                  league  
As in a cloudy chair ascending rides  
Audacious, but that seat soon failing, meets  
A vast vacuity : all unawares  
Flutt'ring his pennons vain plumb down he  
                  drops  
Ten thousand fathom deep, and to this hour  
Down had been falling, had not by ill chance  
The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud  
Instinct with fire and nitre hurried him  
As many miles aloft : that fury stay'd,  
Quench'd in a boggy Syrtis, neither sea,  
Nor good dry land : nigh founder'd on he fares,  
Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,

*Frith*, Firth, an arm of the sea.

*Bellona*, Goddess of war, sister of Mars.

*Vanes*, Wings.

*Syrtis*. The Syrtes were two dangerous gulfs on the coast of Africa.

## A Shorter Milton

Half flying ; behoves him now both oar and sail.

As when a gryphon through the wilderness  
With winged course o'er hill or moory dale,  
Pursues the Arimasgian, who by stealth  
Had from his wakeful custody purloin'd  
The guarded gold : so eagerly the fiend  
O'er bog or steep, through straight, rough, dense,  
or rare,

With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,  
And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies :  
At length a universal hubbub wild  
Of stunning sounds and voices all confus'd  
Borne through the hollow dark assaults his ear  
With loudest vehemence : thither he plies,  
Undaunted to meet there whatever power  
Or spirit of the nethermost abyss  
Might in that noise reside, of whom to ask  
Which way the nearest coast of darkness lies  
Bordering on light ; when straight behold the  
throne

Of Chaos, and his dark pavilion spread  
Wide on the wasteful Deep ; with him enthron'd  
Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things,  
The consort of his reign ; and by them stood  
Orcus and Ades, and the dreaded name  
Of Demogorgon ; Rumour next and Chance,  
And Tumult and Confusion all imbroil'd,  
And Discord with a thousand various mouths.

*Gryphon*, A fabulous creature, part eagle, part lion, who watched over gold mines.

*Arimasgian*. The Arimaspians were a one-eyed Scythian people who wore gold ornaments, for which they constantly fought the gryphons.

*Orcus and Ades* (Hades), Names of the Underworld.

*Demogorgon*, Oldest of the gods, a dweller in the Underworld.

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

To whom Satan turning boldly, thus. 'Ye  
Powers

And Spirits of this nethermost abyss,  
Chaos and ancient Night, I come no spy,  
With purpose to explore or to disturb  
The secrets of your realm, but by constraint  
Wand'ring this darksome desert, as my way  
Lies through your spacious empire up to light,  
Alone, and without guide, half lost, I seek  
What readiest path leads where your gloomy  
bounds

Confine with Heav'n ; or if some other place  
From your dominion won, th' ethereal King  
Possesses lately, thither to arrive  
I travel this profound, direct my course ;  
Directed, no mean recompense it brings  
To your behoof, if I that region lost,  
All usurpation thence expell'd, reduce  
To her original darkness and your sway  
(Which is my present journey) and once more  
Erect the standard there of ancient Night ;  
Yours be th' advantage all, mine the revenge.'

Thus Satan ; and him thus the Anarch old  
With falt'ring speech and visage incompas'd  
Answer'd. 'I know thee, stranger, who thou  
art,  
That mightily leading angel, who of late  
Made head against Heav'n's King, though over-  
thrown.

I saw and heard, for such a numerous host  
Fled not in silence through the frightened deep  
With ruin upon ruin, rout on rout,  
Confusion worse confounded ; and Heav'n gates  
Pour'd out by millions her victorious bands  
Pursuing. I upon my frontiers here



## A Shorter Milton

Keep residence ; if all I can will serve,  
That little which is left so to defend  
Encroach'd on still through your intestine broils  
Weak'ning the sceptre of old Night : first Hell  
Your dungeon stretching far and wide beneath ;  
Now lately Heaven and Earth, another world,  
Hung o'er my realm, link'd in a golden chain  
To that side Heav'n from whence your legions  
fell :

If that way be your walk, you have not far ;  
So much the nearer danger ; go and speed ;  
Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain.'

He ceas'd ; and Satan stayed not to reply,  
But glad that now his sea should find a shore,  
With fresh alacrity and force renew'd  
Springs upward like a pyramid of fire  
Into the wild expanse, and through the shock  
Of fighting elements, on all sides round  
Environ'd wins his way ; harder beset  
And more endanger'd, than when Argo pass'd  
Through Bosphorus betwixt the justling rocks :  
Or when Ulysses on the larboard shunn'd  
Charybdis, and by th' other whirlpool steer'd.  
So he with difficulty and labour hard  
Mov'd on, with difficulty and labour he ;  
But he once past, soon after when man fell,  
Strange alteration ! Sin and Death amain  
Following his track, such was the will of Heav'n,  
Pav'd after him a broad and beaten way  
Over the dark abyss, whose boiling gulf  
Tamely endur'd a bridge of wond'rous length

*Argo*, The ship that took Jason and his company of fifty heroes to  
retch the golden fleece. They passed safely through the *Bosphorus*  
strait, the banks of which were supposed to close together and crush  
between them ships which tried to pass.

*Charybdis*. See note on page 72.

## Paradise Lost.—Book II

From Hell continu'd, reaching th' utmost orb  
Of this frail world ; by which the spirits perverse  
With easy intercourse pass to and fro  
To tempt or punish mortals, except whom  
God and good Angels guard by special grace.  
But now at last the sacred influence  
Of light appears, and from the walls of Heav'n  
Shoots far into the bosom of dim Night  
A glimmering dawn ; here Nature first begins  
Her farthest verge, and Chaos to retire  
As from her outmost works a brok'n foe  
With tumult less and with less hostile din,  
That Satan with less toil, and now with ease  
Wafts on the calmer wave by dubious light  
And like a weather-beaten vessel holds  
Gladly the port, though shrouds and tackle torn ;  
Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,  
Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold  
Far off th' empyreal Heav'n, extended wide  
In circuit, undetermin'd square or round,  
With opal tow'rs and battlements adorn'd  
Of living sapphire, once his native seat ;  
And fast by hanging in a golden chain  
This pendent world, in bigness as a star  
Of smallest magnitude close by the moon.  
Thither full fraught with mischievous revenge,  
Accurs'd, and in a cursed hour he hies.

SELECTIONS FROM THE REMAINING  
BOOKS OF PARADISE LOST

*Invocation to Light*

HAIL holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,  
Or of th' Eternal coeternal beam  
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is  
light,

And never but in unapproach'd light  
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,  
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.  
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,  
Whose fountain who shall tell? before the sun,  
Before the Heavens thou wert, and at the voice  
Of God, as with a mantle didst invest  
The rising world of waters dark and deep,  
Won from the void and formless infinite.  
Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,  
Escap'd the Stygian pool, though long detain'd  
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight  
Through utter and through middle darkness  
borne

With other notes than to th' Orphean lyre  
I sung of Chaos and eternal Night,  
Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down  
The dark descent, and up to reascend,  
Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,  
And feel thy sovran vital lamp; but thou  
Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain  
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;  
So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,  
Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more

## Paradise Lost : Selections

Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt  
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,  
Smit with the love of sacred song ; but chief  
Thee Sion and the flowery brooks beneath  
That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,  
Nightly I visit : nor sometimes forget  
Those other two equall'd with me in fate,  
So were I equall'd with them in renown,  
Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,  
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.  
Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move  
Harmonious numbers ; as the wakeful bird  
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid  
Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year  
Seasons return, but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;  
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark  
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men  
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair  
Presented with a universal blank  
Of nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,  
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.  
So much the rather thou Celestial light  
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

### *Book III*

*Thamyris*, A Thracian poet who challenged the Muses to a contest and, being defeated, was deprived of his sight.

*Mæonides*, Another name for Homer.

*Tiresias*, A blind soothsayer of Thebes.

## A Shorter Milton

### *The Almighty foretells the last Judgment*

‘All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide  
In Heaven, or Earth, or under Earth in Hell ;  
When thou attended gloriously from Heav’n  
Shalt in the sky appear, and from thee send  
The summoning Archangels to proclaim  
Thy dread tribunal : forthwith from all winds  
The living, and forthwith the cited dead  
Of all past ages to the general doom  
Shall hast’n, such a peal shall rouse their sleep.  
Then all thy saints assembl’d, thou shalt judge  
Bad men and angels, they arraign’d shall sink  
Beneath thy sentence ; Hell, her numbers full,  
Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. Meanwhile  
The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring  
New Heav’n and Earth, wherein the just shall  
dwell

And after all their tribulations long  
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,  
With joy and love triumphing, and fair truth.  
Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,  
For regal sceptre then no more shall need,  
God shall be all in all. But all ye gods  
Adore him, who to compass all this dies,  
Adore the Son, and honour him as me.’

No sooner had th’ Almighty ceas’d, but all  
The multitude of angels with a shout  
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet  
As from blest voices, uttering joy, Heav’n rung  
With jubilee, and loud hosannas fill’d  
The eternal regions : lowly reverent  
Towards either throne they bow, and to the  
ground

## Paradise Lost : Selections

With solemn adoration down they cast  
Their crowns inwove with amarant and gold,  
Immortal amarant, a flow'r which once  
In Paradise, fast by the Tree of Life  
Began to bloom, but soon for man's offence  
To Heav'n remov'd, where first it grew, there  
grows,

And flow'rs aloft shading the fount of life,  
And where the river of bliss through midst of  
Heav'n

Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream ;  
With these that never fade the spirits elect  
Bind their resplendent locks inwreath'd with  
beams,

Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the  
bright .

Pavement that like a sea of jasper shone  
Impurpl'd with celestial roses smil'd.  
Then crown'd again their gold'n harps they took,  
Harps ever tun'd, that glittering by their side  
Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet  
Of charming symphony they introduce  
Their sacred song, and waken raptures high ;  
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join  
Melodious part, such concord is in Heav'n.

Thee Father first they sung omnipotent,  
Immutable, immortal, infinite,  
Eternal King ; thee Author of all being,  
Fountain of light, thyself invisible  
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st  
Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st  
The full blaze of thy beams, and through a  
cloud

Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine,  
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,

## A Shorter Milton

Yet dazzle Heav'n, that brightest Seraphim  
Approach not, but with both wings veil their  
eyes.

*Book III*

### *Satan views the World*

Satan from hence now on the lower stair  
That scal'd by steps of gold to Heav'n gate  
Looks down with wonder at the sudden view  
Of all this world at once. As when a scout  
Through dark and desert ways with peril gone  
All night ; at last by break of cheerful dawn  
Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill,  
Which to his eye discovers unaware  
The goodly prospect of some foreign land  
First seen, or some renown'd metropolis  
With glistening spires and pinnacles adorn'd,  
Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams.  
Such wonder seiz'd, though after Heaven seen,  
The Spirit malign, but much more envy seiz'd  
At sight of all this world beheld so fair.  
Round he surveys, and well might, where he stood  
So high above the circling canopy  
Of night's extended shade ; from eastern point  
Of Libra to the fleecy star that bears  
Andromeda far off Atlantic seas  
Beyond th' horizon ; then from pole to pole  
He views in breadth, and without longer pause  
Down right into the world's first region throws  
His flight precipitant, and winds with ease  
Through the pure marble air his oblique way

*Libra*, The constellation of the Scales.

*Fleecy star*, The constellation Aries, the Ram.

*Andromeda*. The constellation of the Ram is below the constellation Andromeda ; hence ' bears Andromeda.'

## Paradise Lost : Selections

Amongst innumerable stars, that shone  
Stars distant, but nigh hand seem'd other worlds,  
Or other worlds they seem'd, or happy isles,  
Like those Hesperian gardens fam'd of old,  
Fortunate fields, and groves and flow'ry vales,  
Thrice happy isles, but who dwelt happy there  
He stay'd not to enquire : above them all  
The golden sun in splendour likest heaven  
Allur'd his eye : thither his course he bends  
Through the calm firmament ; but up or down  
By centre, or eccentric, hard to tell.

*Book III*

### *Satan's soliloquy after his defeat*

' Me miserable ! which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair ?  
Which way I fly is Hell ; myself am Hell ;  
And in the lowest deep a lower deep  
Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,  
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.  
O then at last relent : is there no place  
Left for repentance, none for pardon left ?  
None left but by submission ; and that word  
Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame  
Among the spirits beneath, whom I seduc'd  
With other promises and other vaunts  
Than to submit, boasting I could subdue  
Th' Omnipotent. Ay me, they little know  
How dearly I abide that boast so vain,  
Under what torments inwardly I groan :  
While they adore me on the throne of Hell,  
With diadem and sceptre high advanc'd  
The lower still I fall, only supreme



## A Shorter Milton

In misery ; such joy ambition finds.  
But say I could repent and could obtain  
By act of grace my former state ; how soon  
Would highth recall high thoughts, how soon  
unsay  
What feign'd submission swore : ease would  
recant  
Vows made in pain, as violent and void.  
For never can true reconcilment grow  
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierc'd so  
deep :  
Which would but lead me to a worse relapse,  
And heavier fall : so should I purchase dear  
Short intermission bought with double smart.  
This knows my punisher ; therefore as far  
From granting he, as I from begging peace :  
All hope excluded thus, behold instead  
Of us out-cast, exil'd, his new delight,  
Mankind created, and for him this world.  
So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,  
Farewell remorse : all good to me is lost ;  
Evil be thou my good ; by thee at least  
Divided empire with Heav'n's King I hold  
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign ;  
As Man ere long, and this new world shall know.'

*Book IV*

### *Paradise*

In this pleasant soil  
His far more pleasant garden God ordain'd ;  
Out of the fertile ground he caus'd to grow  
All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste ;  
And all amid them stood the tree of Life,  
High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit

## Paradise Lost : Selections

Of vegetable gold ; and next to Life  
Our death the tree of Knowledge grew fast by,  
Knowledge of good bought dear by knowing ill.  
Southward through Eden went a river large,  
Nor chang'd his course, but through the shaggy  
hill

Pass'd underneath ingulf'd, for God had thrown  
That mountain as his garden mould high rais'd  
Upon the rapid current, which through veins  
Of porous earth with kindly thirst up drawn,  
Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill  
Water'd the garden ; thence united fell  
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,  
Which from his darksome passage now appears,  
And now divided into four main streams,  
Runs diverse, wand'ring many a famous realm  
And country whereof here needs no account,  
But rather to tell how, if art could tell,  
How from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,  
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,  
With mazy error under pendent shades  
Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed  
Flow'rs worthy of Paradise which not nice art  
In beds and curious knots, but nature boon  
Pour'd forth profuse on hill and dale and plain,  
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote  
The open field, and where the unpierc'd shade  
Imbrown'd the noontide bow'rs : Thus was this  
place,

A happy rural seat of various view :  
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and  
balm,

Others whose fruit burnish'd with golden rind  
Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,  
If true, here only, and of delicious taste :

## A Shorter Milton

Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks  
Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd,  
Or palmy hillock, or the flow'ry lap  
Of some irriguous valley spread her store,  
Flow'rs of all hue, and without thorn the rose :  
Another side, umbrageous grots and caves  
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine  
Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps  
Luxuriant ; meanwhile murmuring waters fall  
Down the slope hills, dispers'd, or in a lake,  
That to the fringed bank with myrtle crown'd,  
Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.  
The birds their choir apply ; airs, vernal airs,  
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune  
The trembling leaves, while universal Pan  
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance  
Led on th' eternal Spring.

*Book IV*

### *Evening*

Now came still evening on, and twilight grey  
Had in her sober livery all things clad ;  
Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,  
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests  
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale ;  
She all night long her amorous descant sung ;  
Silence was pleas'd : now glow'd the firmament  
With living sapphires : Hesperus that led  
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon  
Rising in clouded majesty, at length  
Apparent queen unveil'd her peerless light,  
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

*Book IV*

*Hesperus, The evening star.*

## Paradise Lost : Selections

### *Satan's defiance*

So threaten'd he, but Satan to no threats  
Gave heed, but waxing more in rage repli'd.  
' Then when I am thy captive talk of chains,  
Proud limitary Cherub, but ere then  
Far heavier load thyself expect to feel  
From my prevailing arm, though Heaven's King  
Ride on thy wings, and thou with thy compeers,  
Us'd to the yoke, draw'st his triumphant wheels  
In progress through the road of Heav'n star-  
pav'd.'

While thus he spake, th' angelic squadron  
bright  
Turn'd fiery red, sharp'ning in mooned horns  
Their phalanx, and began to hem him round  
With ported spears, as thick as when a field  
Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends  
Her bearded grove of ears, which way the wind  
Sways them; the careful ploughman doubting  
. . . stands  
Lest on the threshing floor his hopeful sheaves  
Prove chaff. On th' other side Satan alarm'd  
Collecting all his might dilated stood,  
Like Teneriff or Atlas unremov'd :  
His stature reach'd the sky, and on his crest  
Sat horror plum'd ; nor wanted in his grasp  
What seem'd both spear and shield : now dread-  
ful deeds  
Might have ensu'd, nor only Paradise  
In this commotion, but the starry cope

*Ceres*, The goddess of the corn.

*Teneriffe*, An island off the north-west coast of Africa.

*Atlas*, A mountain range in North Africa.

## A Shorter Milton

Of Heav'n perhaps, or all the elements  
At least had gone to wrack, disturb'd and torn  
With violence of this conflict, had not soon  
Th' Eternal to prevent such horrid fray  
Hung forth in Heav'n his golden scales, yet seen  
Betwixt Astrea and the Scorpion sign,  
Wherein all things created first he weighed,  
The pendulous round earth with balanc'd air  
In counterpoise, now ponders all events,  
Battles and realms : in these he put two weights  
The sequel each of parting and of fight ;  
The latter quick up flew, and kick'd the beam ;  
Which Gabriel spying, thus bespake the fiend.  
    'Satan, I know thy strength, and thou know'st  
        mine,  
'Neither our own but giv'n ; what folly then  
To boast what arms can do, since thine no more  
Than Heav'n permits, nor mine, though doubl'd  
        now  
To trample thee as mire : for proof look up,  
And read thy lot in yon celestial sign  
Where thou art weigh'd, and shown how light,  
        how weak,  
If thou resist.' The fiend look'd up and knew  
His mounted scale aloft : nor more ; but fled  
Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of  
        night.

### *Book IV*

*Astrea*, The constellation of the Virgin ; the Virgin, the Scales,  
and the Scorpion are signs of the Zodiac.

## Paradise Lost : Selections

### *Raphael's journey to Earth*

So spake th' eternal Father, and fulfill'd  
All justice : nor delay'd the winged saint  
After his charge receiv'd ; but from among  
Thousand celestial ardours, where he stood  
Veil'd with his gorgeous wings, up springing  
light  
Flew through the midst of Heav'n ; th' angelic  
choirs  
On each hand parting, to his speed gave way  
Through all th' empyreal road ; till at the gate  
Of Heav'n arriv'd, the gate self-open'd wide  
On golden hinges turning, as by work  
Divine the sovran Architect had fram'd.  
From hence, no cloud, or, to obstruct his sight,  
Star interpos'd, however small he sees,  
Not unconform to other shining globes,  
Earth and the gard'n of God, with cedars crown'd  
Above all hills. As when by night the glass  
Of Galileo, less assur'd, observes  
Imagin'd lands and regions in the moon :  
Or pilot from amidst the Cyclades  
Delos or Samos first appearing kens  
A cloudy spot. Down thither prone in flight  
He speeds, and through the vast ethereal sky  
Sails between worlds and worlds, with steady  
wing  
Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan  
Winnows the buxom air ; till within soar  
Of tow'ring eagles, to all the fowls he seems

*Cyclades*, The islands in the Ægean Sea, encircling Delos. *Samos*, an island in the eastern Ægean ; actually it is not one of the Cyclades.

## A Shorter Milton

A phoenix, gaz'd by all, as that sole bird,  
When to inshrine his relics in the sun's  
Bright temple, to Egyptian Thebes he flies.  
At once on th' eastern cliff of Paradise  
He lights, and to his proper shape returns  
A seraph wing'd ; six wings he wore, to shade  
His lineaments divine ; the pair that clad  
Each shoulder broad, came mantling o'er his breast  
With regal ornament ; the middle pair  
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round  
Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold  
And colours dipp'd in Heav'n ; the third his feet  
Shadow'd from either heel with feather'd mail  
Sky-tinctur'd grain. Like Maia's son he stood,  
And shook his plumes, that Heav'nly fragrance  
fill'd

The circuit wide. Straight knew him all the  
bands

Of angels under watch ; and to his state,  
And to his message high in honour rise ;  
For on some message high they guess'd him  
bound.

Their glittering tents he pass'd, and now is come  
Into the blissful field, through groves of myrrh,  
And flow'ring odours, cassia, nard, and balm ;  
A wilderness of sweets ; for Nature here  
Wanton'd as in her prime, and play'd at will  
Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,  
Wild above rule or art ; enormous bliss.

*Book V*

*Phoenix*, An Arabian bird, which lived for 500 years and then put an end to its life by placing itself on a burning pile of aromatic wood. Out of the ashes a new bird was born, which carried its predecessor's remains to Heliopolis, the temple of the sun, in lower Egypt ; not to Thebes as Milton here suggests.

*Maia*, Daughter of Atlas, and mother of Mercury.

## Paradise Lost : Selections

### *War in Heaven*

To whom in brief thus Abdiel stern repli'd.  
' Apostate still thou err'st, nor end wilt find  
Of erring, from the path of truth remote :  
Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name  
Of servitude to serve whom God ordains,  
Or Nature ; God and Nature bid the same,  
When he who rules is worthiest, and excels  
Them whom he governs. This is servitude,  
To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebell'd  
Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,  
Thyself not free, but to thyself enthrall'd ;  
Yet lewdly dar'st our minist'ring upbraid.  
Reign thou in Hell thy kingdom, let me serve  
In Heav'n God ever blest, and his divine  
Behests obey, worthiest to be obey'd,  
Yet chains in Hell, not realms expect : mean-  
while  
From me return'd, as erst thou saidst, from  
flight,  
This greeting on thy impious crest receive.'

So saying, a noble stroke he lifted high,  
Which hung not, but so swift with tempest fell  
On the proud crest of Satan, that no sight,  
Nor motion of swift thought, less could his shield  
Such ruin intercept : ten paces huge  
He back recoil'd ; the tenth on bended knee  
His massy spear upstay'd ; as if on earth  
Winds under ground or waters forcing way  
Sidelong, had push'd a mountain from his seat  
Half sunk with all his pines. Amazement seiz'd  
The rebel thrones, but greater rage to see



## A Shorter Milton

Thus foil'd their mightiest, ours joy fill'd, and  
shout,

Presage of victory and fierce desire  
Of battle : whereat Michael bid sound  
Th' archangel trumpet ; through the vast of  
Heav'n

It sounded, and the faithful armies rung  
Hosanna to the Highest : nor stood at gaze  
The adverse legions, nor less hideous join'd  
The horrid shock : now storming fury rose,  
And clamour such as heard in Heav'n till now  
Was never, arms on armour clashing bray'd  
Horrible discord, and the madding wheels  
Of brazen chariots rag'd ; dire was the noise  
Of conflict ; over head the dismal hiss  
Of fiery darts in flaming volleys flew,  
And flying vaulted either host with fire.  
So under fiery cope together rush'd  
Both battles main, with ruinous assault  
And inextinguishable rage ; all Heav'n  
Resounded, and had earth been then, all earth  
Had to her centre shook. What wonder ? when  
Millions of fierce encount'ring angels fought  
On either side, the least of whom could wield  
These elements, and arm him with the force  
Of all their regions : how much more of power  
Army against army numberless to raise  
Dreadful combustion warring, and disturb,  
Though not destroy, their happy native seat ;  
Had not th' eternal King omnipotent  
From his stronghold of Heav'n high overrul'd  
And limited their might ; though number'd  
such

As each divided legion might have seem'd  
A numerous host, in strength each armed hand

## Paradise Lost : Selections

A legion ; led in fight, yet leader seem'd  
Each warrior single as in chief, expert  
When to advance, or stand, or turn the sway  
Of battle, open when, and when to close  
The ridges of grim war ; no thought of flight,  
None of retreat, no unbecoming deed  
That argu'd fear ; each on himself reli'd,  
As only in his arm the moment lay  
Of victory ; deeds of eternal fame  
Were done, but infinite : for wide was spread  
That war and various ; sometimes on firm  
ground

A standing fight, then soaring on main wing  
Tormented all the air ; all air seem'd then  
Conflicting fire : long time in even scale  
The battle hung ; till Satan, who that day  
Prodigious power had shown, and met in arms  
No equal, ranging through the dire attack  
Of fighting Seraphim confus'd, at length  
Saw where the sword of Michael smote, and  
fell'd

Squadrons at once, with huge two-handed sway  
Brandish'd aloft the horrid edge came down  
Wide wasting ; such destruction to withstand  
He hasted, and oppos'd the rocky orb  
Of tenfold adamant, his ample shield  
A vast circumference.

*Book VI*

### *The Fifth Day of Creation*

And God said, ' Let the waters generate  
Reptile with spawn abundant, living soul :  
And let fowl fly above the earth, with wings,  
Display'd on the op'n firmament of Heav'n.'

## A Shorter Milton

And God created the great whales, and each  
Soul living, each that crept, which plenteously  
The waters generated by their kinds,  
And every bird of wing after his kind ;  
And saw that it was good, and bless'd them,  
saying,

‘ Be fruitful, multiply, and in the seas  
And lakes and running streams the waters fill ;  
And let the fowl be multiply'd on the earth.’  
Forthwith the sounds and seas, each creek and  
bay

With fry innumerable swarm, and shoals  
Of fish that with their fins and shining scales  
Glide under the green wave, in sculls that oft  
Bank the mid sea : part single or with mate,  
Graze the seaweed their pasture, and through  
groves

Of coral stray, or sporting with quick glance  
Show to the sun their wav'd coats dropt with  
gold,

Or in their pearly shells at ease, attend  
Moist nutriment, or under rocks their food  
In jointed armour watch : on smooth the seal,  
And bended dolphins play : part huge of bulk  
Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait  
Tempest the ocean : there Leviathan  
Hugest of living creatures, on the deep  
Stretch'd like a promontory sleeps or swims,  
And seems a moving land, and at his gills  
Draws in, and at his trunk spouts out a sea.  
Meanwhile the tepid caves, and fens and shores  
Their brood as numerous hatch, from the egg that  
soon

## Paradise Lost : Selections

Bursting with kindly rupture forth disclos'd  
Their callow young, but feather'd soon and fledge  
They summ'd their pens, and soaring th' air  
sublime

With clang despis'd the ground, under a cloud  
In prospect ; there the eagle and the stork  
On cliffs and cedar tops their eyries build :  
Part loosely wing the region, part more wise  
In common, rang'd in figure wedge their way,  
Intelligent of seasons, and set forth  
Their aery caravan high over seas  
Flying, and over lands with mutual wing  
Easing their flight ; so steers the prudent crane  
Her annual voyage, borne on winds ; the air  
Floats, as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd  
plumes :

From branch to branch the smaller birds with  
song

Solac'd the woods, and spread their painted wings  
Till ev'n, nor then the solemn nightingale  
Ceas'd warbling, but all night tun'd her soft lays :  
Others on silver lakes and rivers bath'd  
Their downy breast ; the swan with arched neck  
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows  
Her state with oary feet : yet oft they quit  
The dank, and rising on stiff pennons, tow'r  
The mid aerial sky : others on ground  
Walk'd firm ; the crested cock whose clarion  
sounds

The silent hours, and th' other whose gay train  
Adorns him, colour'd with the florid hue  
Of rainbows and starry eyes. The waters thus  
With fish replenish'd, and the air with fowl,  
Ev'ning and morn solemniz'd the fifth day.

*Book VII*

## A Shorter Milton

### *Eve's Lament*

' Forsake me not thus, Adam, witness Heav'n  
What love sincere, and reverence in my heart  
I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,  
Unhappily deceiv'd ; thy suppliant  
I beg, and clasp thy knees ; bereave me not,  
Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,  
Thy counsel in this uttermost distress,  
My only strength and stay : forlorn of thee,  
Whither shall I betake me, where subsist ?  
While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,  
Between us two let there be peace, both joining,  
As join'd in injuries, one enmity  
Against a foe by doom express assign'd us,  
That cruel serpent : on me exercise not  
Thy hatred for this misery befall'n,  
On me already lost, me, than thyself  
More miserable ; both have sinn'd, but thou  
Against God only, I against God and thee,  
And to the place of judgment will return,  
There with my cries importune Heaven, that all  
The sentence from thy head remov'd may light  
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,  
Me, me only just object of his ire.'

She ended weeping, and her lowly plight,  
Immoveable till peace obtain'd from fault  
Acknowledg'd and deplor'd, in Adam wrought  
Commiseration ; soon his heart relented  
Towards her, his life so late and sole delight,  
Now at his feet submissive in distress,  
Creature so fair his reconciliation seeking,  
His counsel whom she had displeas'd, his aid ;  
As one disarm'd, his anger all he lost.

*Book X*

## Paradise Lost : Selections

### *Michael shows to Adam the kingdoms of the Earth*

It was a hill  
Of Paradise the highest, from whose top  
The hemisphere of earth in clearest ken  
Stretch'd out to amplest reach of prospect lay.  
Not higher that hill nor wider looking round,  
Whereon for different cause the tempter set  
Our second Adam in the wilderness,  
To show him all earth's kingdoms and their glory.  
His eye might there command wherever stood  
City of old or modern fame, the seat  
Of mightiest empire, from the destin'd walls  
Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can  
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,  
To Paquin of Sinæan kings, and thence  
To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul  
Down to the golden Chersonese, or where  
The Persian in Ecbatan sat, or since  
In Hispahan, or where the Russian Ksar  
In Mosco, or the Sultan in Bizance,  
Turchestan-born ; nor could his eye not ken

*Cambalu*, Possibly Karakorum, about 300 miles south of Lake Baikal in Central Asia, capital of the empire of Kublai Khan, in whose dominions China (*Cathay*) was included in the thirteenth century A.D.

*Samarchand*, Samarkand, capital of Timurlane, near the river Oxus in Russian Turkestan. *Temir*, Timur the Lame or Timurlane, Tamberlaine the Great, who assumed the title of Great Khan in 1369.

*Paquin*, Pekin. *Sinæan*, Chinese.

*Mogul*. The Moguls were the Mohammedan rulers of India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

*Golden Chersonese*, The Malay Peninsula.

*Ecbatan*, Ecbatana, chief city of the ancient Medes.

*Hispahan*, Ispahan, chief city of Persia in the Middle Ages.

*Bizance*, Byzantium, the earlier name for Constantinople.

## A Shorter Milton

Th' empire of Negus to his utmost port  
Ercoco, and the less maritime kings,  
Mombaza, and Quiloa, and Melind,  
And Sofala thought Ophir, to the realm  
Of Congo, and Angola farthest south ;  
Or thence from Niger flood to Atlas mount  
The kingdoms of Almansor, Fez and Sus,  
Marocco, and Algiers, and Tremisen ;  
On Europe thence, and where Rome was to sway  
The world : in spirit perhaps he also saw  
Rich Mexico the seat of Motezume,  
And Cusco in Peru, the richer seat  
Of Atabalipa, and yet unspoil'd  
Guiana, whose great city Geryon's sons  
Call El Dorado : but to nobler sights  
Michael from Adam's eyes the film remov'd,  
Which that false fruit that promis'd clearer sight  
Had bred.

### Book XI

*Negus*, The emperor of Abyssinia, called by Europeans in Milton's time Prester John.

*Ercoco*, Harkiko on the Red Sea.

*Mombaza*, *Quiloa*, *Melind*, and *Sofala*, On the east coast of Africa.

*Ophir*, On the coast of Oman in Arabia.

*Angola*, On the west coast of Africa.

*Almansor*, A Moorish sovereign, who ruled over the north-west, and a great part of the north, coast of Africa.

*Marocco* and *Fez*, On the Atlantic in north-west Africa.

*Algiers*, *Sus* (*Susa*), and *Tremisen*, In north Africa on the Mediterranean.

*Motezume*, Montezuma, the great Aztec ruler of Mexico, who was overthrown by the Spaniards under Cortés in 1521.

*Cusco*, Cuzco, capital city of the Inca rulers of Peru. The Inca, Atahualpa (*Atabalipa*), was defeated and put to death by Pizarro and the Spaniards in 1533.

*Guiana*, On the north coast of South America, whither Sir Walter Raleigh sailed in pursuit of gold.

*Geryon's sons*, The Spaniards.

*El Dorado*, The city of Gold, so called from its reputed wealth.

## Paradise Lost : Selections

### *Adam's vision of Wars to come*

He look'd and saw wide territory spread  
Before him, towns, and rural works between,  
Cities of men with lofty gates and tow'rs,  
Concourse in arms, fierce faces threat'ning war,  
Giants of mighty bone, and bold emprise ;  
Part wield their arms, part curb the foaming  
steed,  
Single or in array of battle rang'd  
Both horse and foot, nor idly must'ring stood ;  
One way a band select from forage drives  
A herd of beeves, fair oxen and fair kine  
From a fat meadow ground ; or fleecy flock,  
Ewes and their bleating lambs over the plain,  
Their booty ; scarce with life the shepherds fly,  
But call in aid, which tacks a bloody fray.  
With cruel tournament the squadrons join ;  
Where cattle pastur'd late, now scatter'd lies  
With carcasses and arms th' ensanguin'd field  
Deserted : Others to a city strong  
Lay siege, encamp'd ; by battery, scale, and  
mine,  
Assaulting ; others from the wall defend  
With dart and jav'lin, stones and sulphurous fire ;  
On each hand slaughter and gigantic deeds.  
In other part the scepter'd heralds call  
To council in the city gates : anon  
Gray-headed men and grave, with warriors mix'd,  
Assemble, and harangues are heard, but soon  
In factious opposition, till at last  
Of middle age one rising, eminent  
In wise deport, spake much of right and wrong,  
Of justice, of religion, truth and peace,



## A Shorter Milton

And judgment from above : him old and young  
Exploded, and had seiz'd with violent hands,  
Had not a cloud descending snatch'd him thence,  
Unseen amid the throng : so violence  
Proceeded, and oppression, and sword-law  
Through all the plain, and refuge none was found.  
Adam was all in tears, and to his guide  
Lamenting turn'd full sad ; ' O what are these,  
Death's ministers, not men, who thus deal death  
Inhumanly to men, and multiply  
Ten thousand fold the sin of him who slew  
His brother ; for of whom such massacre  
Make they but of their brethren, men of men ?'  
*Book XI*

### *Michael's Prophecy of Christ's Nativity*

'At his birth a star  
Unseen before in Heav'n proclaims him come,  
And guides the eastern sages, who enquire  
His place, to offer incense, myrrh, and gold ;  
His place of birth a solemn angel tells  
To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night ;  
They gladly thither haste, and by a choir  
Of squadron'd angels hear his carol sung.  
A virgin is his mother, but his sire  
The power of the most High ; he shall ascend  
The throne hereditary, and bound his reign  
With earth's wide bounds, his glory with the  
Heav'ns.'

He ceas'd, discerning Adam with such joy  
Surcharg'd, as had like grief been dew'd in tears,  
Without the vent of words, which these he  
breath'd.

## Paradise Lost : Selections

' O prophet of glad tidings, finisher  
Of utmost hope ! now clear I understand  
What oft my steadiest thoughts have search'd in  
vain,

Why our great expectation should be call'd  
The seed of woman : Virgin Mother, hail,  
High in the love of Heav'n, yet from my loins  
Thou shalt proceed, and from thy womb the Son  
Of God most high ; so God with man unites.  
Needs must the serpent now his capital bruise  
Expect with mortal pain : say where and when  
Their fight, what stroke shall bruise the victor's  
heel.'

*Book XII*

## SELECTIONS FROM PARADISE REGAINED

### *Satan meets Christ in the Wilderness*

So spake our Morning Star then in his rise,  
And looking round on every side beheld  
A pathless desert, dusk with horrid shades ;  
The way he came not having mark'd, return  
Was difficult, by human steps untrod ;  
And he still on was led, but with such thoughts  
Accompanied of things past and to come  
Lodg'd in his breast, as well might recommend  
Such solitude before choicest society.

Full forty days he pass'd, whether on hill  
Sometimes, anon in shady vale, each night  
Under the covert of some ancient oak,  
Or cedar, to defend him from the dew,  
Or harbour'd in one cave, is not reveal'd ;  
Nor tasted human food, nor hunger felt  
Till those days ended, hunger'd then at last  
Among wild beasts : they at his sight grew mild,  
Nor sleeping him nor waking harm'd, his walk  
The fiery serpent fled, and noxious worm,  
The lion and fierce tiger glar'd aloof.  
But now an aged man in rural weeds,  
Following, as seem'd, the quest of some stray ewe,  
Or wither'd sticks to gather ; which might serve  
Against a winter's day when winds blow keen,  
To warm him wet return'd from field at eve,  
He saw approach, who first with curious eye  
Perus'd him, then with words thus utt'red spake.

## Paradise Regained : Selections

' Sir, what ill chance hath brought thee to this place

So far from path or road of men, who pass  
In troop or caravan, for single none  
Durst ever, who return'd, and dropt not here  
His carcass, pin'd with hunger and with drouth ?  
I ask the rather, and the more admire,  
For that to me thou seem'st the man, whom late  
Our new baptizing prophet at the ford  
Of Jordan honour'd so, and call'd thee Son  
Of God ; I saw and heard, for we sometimes  
Who dwell this wild, constrain'd by want, come  
forth

To town or village nigh (nighest is far)  
Where aught we hear, and curious are to hear,  
What happ'ns new ; fame also finds us out.'

To whom the Son of God. ' Who brought me  
hither

Will bring me hence, no other guide I seek.'

' By miracle he may,' reply'd the swain,  
' What other way I see not, for we here  
Live on tough roots and stubs, to thirst inur'd  
More than the camel, and to drink go far,  
Men to much misery and hardship born ;  
But if thou be the Son of God, command  
That out of these hard stones be made thee  
bread ;

So shalt thou save thyself and us relieve  
With food, whereof we wretched seldom taste.'

He ended, and the Son of God reply'd.  
' Think'st thou such force in bread ? is it not  
written

(For I discern thee other than thou seem'st)  
Man lives not by bread only, but each word  
Proceeding from the mouth of God ; who fed

## A Shorter Milton

Our fathers here with manna ; in the mount  
Moses was forty days, nor eat nor drank,  
And forty days Elijah without food  
Wander'd this barren waste, the same I now :  
Why dost thou then suggest to me distrust,  
Knowing who I am, as I know who thou art ? '

*Book I*

### *The Vanity of earthly Glory*

For what is glory but the blaze of fame,  
The people's praise, if always praise unmix'd ?  
And what the people but a herd confus'd,  
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol  
Things vulgar, and well weigh'd, scarce worth the  
praise,  
They praise and they admire they know not  
what ;  
And know not whom, but as one leads the other ;  
And what delight to be by such extoll'd,  
To live upon their tongues and be their talk,  
Of whom to be disprais'd were no small praise ?  
His lot who dares be singularly good.  
Th' intelligent among them and the wise  
Are few, and glory scarce of few is rais'd.  
This is true glory and renown, when God  
Looking on the earth, with approbation marks  
The just man, and divulges him through Heaven  
To all his angels, who with true applause  
Recount his praises ; thus he did to Job,  
When to extend his fame through Heaven and  
Earth,  
As thou to thy reproach may'st well remember,  
He ask'd thee, ' Hast thou seen my servant  
Job ? '

## Paradise Regained : Selections

Famous he was in Heaven, on Earth less known ;  
Where glory is false glory, attributed  
To things not glorious, men not worthy of fame.  
They err who count it glorious to subdue  
By conquest far and wide, to overrun  
Large countries, and in field great battles win,  
Great cities by assault : what do these worthies,  
But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave  
Peaceable nations, neighbouring, or remote,  
Made captive, yet deserving freedom more  
Than those their conquerors, who leave behind  
Nothing but ruin wheresoe'er they rove,  
And all the flourishing works of peace destroy.

*Book III*

## SAMSON AGONISTES

### THE ARGUMENT

SAMSON made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retired there to sit a while and bemoan his condition. Where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his tribe, which make the chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can ; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom ; lastly, that this feast was proclaimed by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption ; who in the meanwhile is visited by other persons ; and lastly by a public officer to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or show his strength in their presence ; he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come ; at length persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him ; the chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoah returns full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance : in the midst of which discourse a Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first ; and afterward more distinctly relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself ; wherewith the tragedy ends.

# Samson Agonistes

## The Persons

Samson.  
Manoah *the Father of Samson.*  
Dalila *his Wife.*  
Harapha *of Gath.*  
Public Officer.  
Messenger.  
Chorus *of Danites.*

## *The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.*

*Sams.* A little onward lend thy guiding hand  
To these dark steps, a little further on ;  
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade,  
There I am wont to sit, when any chance  
Relieves me from my task of servile toil,  
Daily in the common prison else enjoin'd me,  
Where I a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw  
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,  
Unwholesome draught : but here I feel amends,  
The breath of Heav'n fresh-blowing, pure and  
sweet,  
With day-spring born ; here leave me to respire.  
This day a solemn feast the people hold  
To Dagon their sea-idol, and forbid  
Laborious works, unwillingly this rest  
Their superstition yields me ; hence with leave  
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek  
This unfrequented place to find some ease,  
Ease to the body some, none to the mind

*Danites.* Dan was one of the twelve tribes of Israel and was assigned land to the north of the country of the Philistines, who held a strip of the Mediterranean coast in the south-west of Palestine.

*Gaza,* The chief city of the Philistines.



## A Shorter Milton

From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm  
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,  
But rush upon me thronging, and present  
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.  
O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold  
Twice by an angel, who at last in sight  
Of both my parents all in flames ascended  
From off the altar, where an off'ring burn'd,  
As in a fiery column charioting  
His godlike presence, and from some great act  
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race ?  
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd  
As of a person separate to God,  
Design'd for great exploits ; if I must die  
Betray'd, captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,  
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze ;  
To grind in brazen fetters under task  
With this Heav'n-gifted strength ? O glorious  
strength  
Put to the labour of a beast, debas'd  
Lower than bond-slave ! Promise was that I  
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver ;  
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him  
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,  
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke ;  
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt  
Divine prediction ; what if all foretold  
Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,  
Whom have I to complain of but myself ?  
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,  
In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,  
Under the seal of silence could not keep,  
But weakly to a woman must reveal it  
O'ercome with importunity and tears.  
O impotence of mind, in body strong !

## Samson Agonistes

But what is strength without a double share  
Of wisdom, vast, unwieldy, burdensome,  
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall  
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,  
But to subserve where wisdom bears command.  
God, when he gave me strength, to show withal  
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.  
But peace, I must not quarrel with the will  
Of highest dispensation, which herein  
Haply had ends above my reach to know :  
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,  
And proves the source of all my miseries ;  
So many, and so huge, that each apart  
Would ask a life to wail, but chief of all,  
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain !  
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,  
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age !  
Light the prime work of God to me is extinct,  
And all her various objects of delight  
Annull'd, which might in part my grief have  
eas'd,

Inferior to the vilest now become  
Of man or worm ; the vilest here excel me,  
They creep, yet see, I dark in light expos'd  
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse and wrong,  
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,  
In power of others, never in my own ;  
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.  
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,  
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse  
Without all hope of day !  
O first created beam, and thou great Word,  
' Let there be light,' and light was over all ;  
Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree ?  
The sun to me is dark

## A Shorter Milton

And silent as the moon,  
When she deserts the night  
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.  
Since light so necessary is to life,  
And almost life itself, if it be true  
That light is in the soul,  
She all in every part ; why was the sight  
To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd ?  
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd,  
And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,  
That she might look at will through every pore ?  
Then had I not been thus exil'd from light ;  
As in the land of darkness yet in light,  
To live a life half dead, a living death,  
And buried ; but O yet more miserable !  
Myself, my sepulchre, a moving grave,  
Buried, yet not exempt  
By privilege of death and burial  
From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs,  
But made hereby obnoxious more  
To all the miseries of life,  
Life in captivity  
Among inhuman foes.  
But who are these ? for with joint pace I hear  
The tread of many feet steering this way ;  
Perhaps my enemies who come to stare  
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,  
Their daily practice to afflict me more.  
*Chor.* This, this is he ; softly a while,

*Chorus.* Milton introduces here a chorus after the manner of Greek tragedy. The chorus remains on the stage throughout the rest of the play, or rather in a special place assigned to them, to the front of, and below, the stage on which the other actors appear. The chorus of twelve or fifteen persons would not all speak all the lines assigned to them ; in some cases, where it might seem more suitable, only the leader of the chorus would speak.

## Samson Agonistes

Let us not break in upon him ;  
O change beyond report, thought, or belief !  
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,  
With languish'd head unprop'd,  
As one past hope, abandon'd  
And by himself given over ;  
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds  
O'er worn and soil'd ;  
Or do my eyes misrepresent ? Can this be he,  
That heroic, that renown'd,  
Irresistible Samson ? whom unarm'd  
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could  
withstand ;  
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid,  
Ran on imbattl'd armies clad in iron,  
And weaponless himself,  
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery  
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,  
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail  
Adamantean proof ;  
But safest he who stood aloof,  
When insupportably his foot advanc'd,  
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,  
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold  
Ascalonite  
Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors turn'd  
Their plated backs under his heel ;  
Or grov'ling soil'd their crested helmets in the  
dust.

*Cuirass*, Breast and back plates of metal, as worn nowadays by the Horse Guards.

*Chalybean*. The Chalybes lived along the south shore of the Black Sea, and were noted metal workers.

*Adamantean*. 'Adamant' is derived from a Greek word for the hardest metal, steel.

*Ascalonite*. Ascalon (Ashkelon) was one of the five royal cities of the Philistines.

## A Shorter Milton

Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,  
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,  
A thousand fell, the flower of Palestine  
In Ramath-lechi famous to this day :  
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders  
bore

The gates of Azza, post, and massy bar  
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,  
No journey of a Sabbath day, and loaded so ;  
Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n.  
Which shall I first bewail,  
Thy bondage or lost sight,  
Prison within prison  
Inseparably dark ?  
Thou are become (O worst imprisonment !)  
The dungeon of thyself ; thy soul  
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause  
complain)

Imprison'd now indeed,  
In real darkness of the body dwells,  
Shut up from outward light  
To incorporate with gloomy night ;  
For inward light alas  
Puts forth no visual beam.  
O mirror of our fickle state,  
Since man on earth unparallel'd !  
The rarer thy example stands,  
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,

*Ramath-lechi*, The place where Samson slaughtered a thousand of the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.

*Azza*, Another name for Gaza.

*Hebron*, Nearly twenty miles south of Jerusalem and one of the oldest cities in the world still in existence. Arba, the ancestor of the giants, Anakim, was supposed to have lived there.

*Gentiles*, The Hebrew name for non-Hebrews.

*Feign to bear*. Refers to the giant Atlas, who carried the heavens on his shoulders.

## Samson Agonistes

Strongest of mortal men,  
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n.  
For him I reckon not in high estate  
Whom long descent of birth  
Or the sphere of fortune raises ;  
But thee whose strength, while virtue was her  
mate  
Might have subdu'd the earth,  
Universally crown'd with highest praises.

*Sams.* I hear the sound of words, their sense the  
air  
Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.

*Chor.* He speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless  
in might,  
The glory late of Israel, now the grief ;  
We come thy friends and neighbours not un-  
known  
From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale  
To visit or bewail thee, or if better,  
Counsel or consolation we may bring,  
Salve to thy sores, apt words have power to  
swage  
The tumours of a troubl'd mind,  
And are as balm to fester'd wounds.

*Sams.* Your coming, friends, revives me, for I  
learn  
Now of my own experience, not by talk,  
How counterfeit a coin they are who friends  
Bear in their superscription (of the most  
I would be understood) in prosperous days  
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head  
Not to be found, though sought. Ye, see, O  
friends,

*Eshtaol and Zora*, Sea-coast towns in the territory of Dan, where  
Samson spent his boyhood.

## A Shorter Milton

How many evils have inclos'd me round ;  
Yet that which was the worse now least afflicts  
me,

Blindness, for had I sight, confus'd with shame,  
How could I once look up, or heave the head,  
Who like a foolish pilot have shipwreck'd,  
My vessel trusted to me from above,  
Gloriously rigg'd ; and for a word, a tear,  
Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God  
To a deceitful woman : tell me friends,  
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool  
In every street, do they not say, how well  
Are come upon him his deserts ? yet why ?  
Immeasurable strength they might behold  
In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean ;  
This with the other should, at least, have pair'd,  
These two proportion'd ill drove me transverse.

*Chor.* Tax not divine disposal, wisest men  
Have err'd, and by bad women been deceiv'd ;  
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.  
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,  
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides ;  
Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder  
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather  
Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,  
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

*Sams.* The first I saw at Timna, and she  
pleas'd

Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed,  
The daughter of an infidel : they knew not  
That what I motion'd was of God ; I knew  
From intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd  
The marriage on ; that by occasion hence

*Timna* (Timnah), A town in the country of the tribe of Judah,  
near the western border of the country of the Philistines.

## Samson Agonistes

I might begin Israel's deliverance,  
The work to which I was divinely call'd ;  
She proving false, the next I took to wife  
(O that I never had ! fond wish too late)  
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,  
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.  
I thought it lawful from my former act,  
And the same end ; still watching to oppress  
Israel's oppressors : of what now I suffer  
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,  
Who vanquish'd with a peal of words (O weakness !)

Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

*Chor.* In seeking just occasion to provoke  
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,  
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness :  
Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.

*Sams.* That fault I take not on me, but transfer  
On Israel's governors, and heads of tribes,  
Who seeing those great acts which God had  
done

Singly by me against their conquerors  
Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd  
Deliverance offer'd : I on th' other side  
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,  
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud  
the doer ;

But they persisted deaf, and would not seem  
To count them things worth notice, till at length  
Their lords the Philistines with gather'd powers  
Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then  
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,

*Sorec*, A valley or wady not far from Gaza.

*Etham*, A rock above Ramath-lechi ; Samson retir'd to a chasm  
of it after his slaughter of the Philistines.



## A Shorter Milton

Not flying, but forecasting in what place  
To set upon them, what advantag'd best ;  
Meanwhile the men of Judah to prevent  
The harass of their land, beset me round ;  
I willingly on some conditions came  
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me  
To the uncircumcis'd a welcome prey,  
Bound with two cords ; but cords to me were  
                  threads

Touch'd with the flame : on their whole host I  
                  flew

Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd  
Their choicest youth ; they only liv'd who fled.  
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,  
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,  
And lorded over them whom now they serve ;  
But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,  
And by their vices brought to servitude,  
Than to love bondage more than liberty,  
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty ;  
And to despise, or envy, or suspect  
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd  
As their deliverer ; if he aught begin,  
How frequent to desert him, and at last  
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds ?

*Chor.* Thy words to my remembrance bring  
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel  
Their great deliverer contemn'd,  
The matchless Gideon in pursuit  
Of Madian and her vanquish'd kings :  
And how ingrateful Ephraim

*Gath*, One of the five royal cities of the Philistines in the north-east of their territory, and west of Jerusalem.

*Succoth*. The princes of Succoth and Penuel refused to give bread to the troops of Gideon when he drove the Midianites across Jordan through their territory (Judges viii. 4-9).

## Samson Agonistes

Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,  
Not worse than by his shield and spear  
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,  
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride  
In that sore battle when so many died  
Without reprieve adjudg'd to death,  
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.

*Sams.* Of such examples add me to the roll,  
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,  
But God's propos'd deliverance not so.

*Chor.* Just are the ways of God,  
And justifiable to men ;  
Unless there be who think not God at all,  
If any be, they walk obscure ;  
For of such doctrine never was there school,  
But the heart of the fool,  
And no man therein doctor but himself.

Yet more there be who doubt his ways not  
just,  
As to his own edicts, found contradicting,  
Then give the reins to wand'ring thought,  
Regardless of his glory's diminution ;  
Till by their own perplexities involv'd  
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,  
But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine th' interminable,  
And tie him to his own prescript,  
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,  
And hath full right to exempt

*Jephtha.* The men of Ephraim left Jephthah and the men of Gilead to fight the Ammonites alone ; and afterwards, when they accused him of not calling them to his aid, he turned on them and defeated them (Judges xii. 1-6). The word *shibboleth* means a stream or flood, and the men of Gilead used it, in the battle against the men of Ephraim, as a test word to tell friend from foe, since in the dialect of Ephraim the 'sh' was pronounced as an 's.'

## A Shorter Milton

Whomso it pleases him by choice  
From national obstruction, without taint  
Of sin, or legal debt ;  
For with his own laws he can best dispense.

He would not else who never wanted means,  
Nor in respect of the enemy just cause  
To set his people free,  
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,  
Against his vow of strictest purity,  
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,  
Unclean, unchaste.

Down Reason then, at least vain reasonings  
down,  
Though Reason here aver  
That moral verdict quits her of unclean :  
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain not his.

But see here comes thy reverend sire  
With careful step, locks white as down,  
Old Manoah : advise  
Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive him.

*Sams.* Aye me, another inward grief awak'd,  
With mention of that name renews th' assault.

*Man.* Brethren and men of Dan, for such ye  
seem,  
Though in this uncouth place ; if old respect,  
As I suppose, towards your once gloried friend,  
My son now captive, hither hath inform'd  
Your younger feet, while mine cast back with  
age

Came lagging after ; say if he be here.

*Chor.* As signal now in low dejected state,  
As erst in highest, behold him where he lies.

*Man.* O miserable change ! is this the man,

*Nazarite*, A Jew who took a special vow to devote himself to the  
service of God.

## Samson Agonistes

That invincible Samson, far renown'd,  
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength  
Equivalent to angels' walk'd their streets,  
None offering fight ; who single combatant  
Duell'd their armies rank'd in proud array,  
Himself an army, now unequal match  
To save himself against a coward arm'd  
At one spear's length. O ever failing trust  
In mortal strength ! and oh what not in man  
Deceivable and vain ! Nay what thing good  
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane ?  
I pray'd for children, and thought barrenness  
In wedlock a reproach ; I gain'd a son,  
And such a son as all men hail'd me happy ;  
Who would be now a father in my stead ?  
O wherefore did God grant me my request,  
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd ?  
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt  
Our earnest prayers, then giv'n with solemn hand  
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind ?  
For this did the angel twice descend ? for this  
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant ;  
Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,  
The miracle of men : then in an hour  
Ensnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,  
Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind  
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves ?  
Alas methinks whom God hath chosen once  
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,  
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall  
Subject him to so foul indignities,  
Be it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

*Sams.* Appoint not heavenly disposition, father,  
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me  
But justly ; I myself have brought them on,

## A Shorter Milton

Sole author I, sole cause : if aught seem vile  
As vile hath been my folly, who have profan'd  
The mystery of God giv'n me under pledge  
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,  
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.  
This well I knew, nor was at all surpris'd,  
But warn'd by oft experience : did not she  
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal  
The secret wrested from me in her highth  
Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it straight  
To them who had corrupted her, my spies,  
And rivals ? In this other was there found  
More faith ? who also in her prime of love,  
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,  
Though offer'd only, by the scent conceiv'd  
Her spurious first-born treason against me ?  
Thrice she assay'd with flattering prayers and  
sighs,  
And amorous reproaches to win from me  
My capital secret, in what part my strength  
Lay stor'd in what part summ'd, that she might  
know :  
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport  
Her importunity, each time perceiving  
How openly, and with what impudence  
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was  
worse  
Than undissembl'd hate) with what contempt  
She sought to make me traitor to myself ;  
Yet the fourth time, when must'ring all her wiles,  
With blandish'd parleys, feminine assaults,  
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night  
To storm me over-watch'd, and wearied out.  
At times when men seek most repose and rest,  
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,

## Samson Agonistes

Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd  
Might easily have shook off all her snares :  
But foul effeminacy held me yok'd  
Her bond-slave ; O indignity, O blot  
To honour and religion ! servile mind  
Rewarded well with servile punishment !  
The base degree to which I now am fall'n,  
These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base  
As was my former servitude, ignoble,  
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,  
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,  
That saw not how degenerately I serv'd.

*Man.* I cannot praise thy marriage choices, son,  
Rather approv'd them not ; but thou didst plead  
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st  
Find some occasion to infest our foes.  
I state not that ; this I am sure ; our foes  
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee  
Their captive and their triumph ; thou the sooner  
Temptation found'st, or over-potent charms  
To violate the sacred trust of silence  
Deposited within thee ; which to have kept  
Tacit, was in thy power ; true ; and thou bear'st  
Enough, and more the burden of that fault ;  
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying  
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains,  
This day the Philistines a popular feast  
Here celebrate in Gaza ; and proclaim  
Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud  
To Dagon, as their god who hath deliver'd  
Thee Samson bound and blind into their hands,  
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a  
slain.

So Dagon shall be magnifi'd, and God,  
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with idols,

## A Shorter Milton

Disglorifi'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn  
By th' idolatrous rout amidst their wine ;  
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,  
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,  
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever  
Could have befall'n thee and thy father's house.

*Sams.* Father, I do acknowledge and confess  
That I this honour, I this pomp have brought  
To Dagon, and advanc'd his praises high  
Among the heathen round ; to God have brought  
Dishonour, obloquy, and op'd the mouths  
Of idolists, and atheists ; have brought scandal  
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt  
In feeble hearts, propense enough before  
To waver, or fall off and join with idols :  
Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,  
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not  
Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.  
This only hope relieves me, that the strife  
With me hath end ; all the contest is now  
'Twixt God and Dagon ; Dagon hath presum'd,  
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,  
His deity comparing and preferring  
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,  
Will not connive, or linger, thus provok'd,  
But will arise and his great name assert :  
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive  
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him  
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,  
And with confusion blank his worshippers.

*Man.* With cause this hope relieves thee, and  
these words  
I as a prophecy receive : for God,

## Samson Agonistes

Nothing more certain, will not long defer  
To vindicate the glory of his name  
Against all competition, nor will long  
Endure it, doubtful whether God be lord,  
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done ?  
Thou must not in the meanwhile here forgot  
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight  
Neglected. I already have made way  
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat  
About thy ransom : well they may by this  
Have satisfi'd their utmost of revenge  
By pains and slaveries, worse than death inflicted  
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.

*Sams.* Spare that proposal, father, spare the  
trouble

Of that solicitation ; let me here,  
As I deserve, pay on my punishment ;  
And expiate, if possible, my crime,  
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd  
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,  
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving  
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded  
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,  
The mark of fool set on his front ?  
But I God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret  
Presumptuously have publish'd, impiously,  
Weakly at least, and shamefully : a sin  
That Gentiles in their parables condemn  
To their abyss and horrid pains confin'd.

*Man.* Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,  
But act not in thy own affliction, son,  
Repent the sin, but if the punishment  
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids ;  
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,  
And let another hand, not thine, exact



## A Shorter Milton

Thy penal forfeit from thyself ; perhaps  
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt ;  
Who evermore approves and more accepts  
(Best pleas'd with humble and filial submission)  
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,  
Than who self-rigorous chooses death as due ;  
Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd  
For self-offence, more than for God offended.  
Reject not then what offer'd means, who knows  
But God hath set before us, to return thee  
Home to thy country and his sacred house,  
Where thou may'st bring thy off'rings, to avert  
His further ire, with prayers and vows renew'd.

*Sams.* His pardon I implore ; but as for life,  
To what end should I seek it ? when in strength  
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes  
With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts  
Of birth from Heav'n foretold and high exploits,  
Full of divine instinct, after some proof  
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond  
The sons of Anak, famous now and blaz'd,  
Fearless of danger, like a petty god  
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded  
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.  
Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell  
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,  
Softened with pleasure and voluptuous life ;  
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge  
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap  
Of a deceitful concubine who shore me  
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,  
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,  
Shav'n, and disarm'd among my enemies.

## Samson Agonistes

*Chor.* Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,  
Which many a famous warrior overturns,  
Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing ruby  
Sparkling, out-pour'd, the flavour, or the smell,  
Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,  
Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

*Sams.* Wherever fountain or fresh current  
flow'd  
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure,  
With touch ethereal of Heav'n's fiery rod  
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying  
Thirst, and refresh'd; nor envy'd them the  
grape  
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with  
fumes.

*Chor.* O madness, to think use of strongest  
wines  
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,  
When God with these forbidd'n made choice to  
rear  
His mighty champion, strong above compare,  
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.

*Sams.* But what avail'd this temperance, not  
complete  
Against another object more enticing ?  
What boots it at one gate to make defence,  
And at another to let in the foe  
Effeminately vanquish'd ? by which means,  
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonour'd,  
quell'd,  
To what can I be useful, wherein serve  
My nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd,  
But to sit idle on the household hearth,  
A burdensome drone ; to visitants a gaze,  
Or pitied object, these redundant locks

## A Shorter Milton

Robustious to no purpose clust'ring down,  
Vain monument of strength ; till length of years  
And sedentary numbness craze my limbs  
To a contemptible old age obscure.  
Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,  
Till vermin or the draff of servile food  
Consume me, and oft-invoked death  
Hast'n the welcome end of all my pains.

*Man.* Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with  
that gift  
Which was expressly giv'n thee to annoy them ?  
Better at home lie bedrid, not only idle,  
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn.  
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer  
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to allay  
After the brunt of battle, can as easy  
Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,  
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast ;  
And I persuade me so ; why else this strength  
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks ?  
His might continues in thee not for nought,  
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

*Sams.* All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,  
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with  
light,  
Nor th' other light of life continue long,  
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand :  
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,  
My hopes all flat, nature within me seems  
In all her functions weary of herself ;  
My race of glory run, and race of shame,  
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

## Samson Agonistes

*Man.* Believe not these suggestions which proceed  
From anguish of the mind and humours black,  
That mingle with thy fancy. I however  
Must not omit a father's timely care  
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance  
By ransom or how else : meanwhile be calm,  
And healing words from these thy friends  
admit.

*Sams.* O that torment should not be confin'd  
To the body's wounds and sores  
With maladies innumerable  
In heart, head, breast, and reins ;  
But must secret passage find  
To th' inmost mind,  
There exercise all his fierce accidents,  
And on her purest spirits prey,  
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,  
With answerable pains, but more intense,  
Though void of corporal sense.

My griefs not only pain me  
As a ling'ring disease,  
But finding no redress, ferment and rage,  
Nor less than wounds immedicable  
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,  
To black mortification.  
Thoughts my tormentors arm'd with deadly  
stings  
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,  
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise  
Dire inflammation which no cooling herb  
Or med'cinal liquor can assuage,  
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.  
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o'er  
To death's benumbing opium as my only cure.

## A Shorter Milton

Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,  
And sense of Heav'n's desertion.

I was his nursling once and choice delight,  
His destin'd from the womb,  
Promis'd by heavenly message twice descending.  
Under his special eye

Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain ;

He led me on to mightiest deeds

Above the nerve of mortal arm

Against the uncircumcis'd, our enemies.

But now hath cast me off as never known,

And to those cruel enemies,

Whom I by his appointment had provok'd,

Left me all helpless with th' irreparable loss

Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated

The subject of their cruelty, or scorn.

Nor am I in the list of them that hope ;

Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless ;

This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,

No long petition, speedy death,

The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

*Chor.* Many are the sayings of the wise

In ancient and in modern books enroll'd ;

Extolling patience as the truest fortitude ;

And to the bearing well of all calamities,

All chances incident to man's frail life

Consolatories writ

With studied argument, and much persuasion  
sought

Lenient of grief and anxious thought,

But with th' afflicted in his pangs their sound

Little prevails, or rather seems a tune,

Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,

Unless he feel within

Some source of consolation from above ;

## Samson Agonistes

Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,  
And fainting spirits uphold.

God of our fathers, what is man !  
That thou towards him with hand so various,  
Or might I say contrarious,  
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,  
Not evenly, as thou rul'st  
The angelic orders and inferior creatures mute,  
Irrational and brute.  
Nor do I name of men the common rout,  
That wand'ring loose about  
Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,  
Heads without name no more remember'd,  
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,  
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd  
To some great work, thy glory,  
And people's safety, which in part they effect :  
Yet toward these thus dignifi'd, thou oft  
Amidst their highth of noon,  
Changest thy countenance, and thy hand with no  
regard

Of highest favours past  
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.

Nor only dost degrade them, or remit  
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismissal,  
But throw'st them lower than thou didst exalt  
them high,

Unseemly falls in human eye,  
Too grievous for the trespass or omission,  
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword  
Of heathen and profane, their carcasses  
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd :  
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,  
And condemnation of the ingrateful multitude.  
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty

## A Shorter Milton

With sickness and disease thou bow'st them down,  
Painful diseases and deform'd,  
In crude old age ;  
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suff'ring  
The punishment of dissolute days, in fine,  
Just or unjust, alike seem miserable,  
For oft alike, both come to evil end.

So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,  
The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.  
What do I beg ? how hast thou dealt already ?  
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn  
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

But who is this, what thing of sea or land ?  
Female of sex it seems,  
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,  
Comes this way sailing  
Like a stately ship  
Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles  
Of Javan or Gadire  
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,  
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,  
Court'd by all the winds that hold them play,  
An amber scent of odorous perfume  
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind ;  
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem,  
And now at nearer view, no other certain  
Than Dalila thy wife.

*Sams.* My wife, my traitress, let her not come  
near me.

*Chor.* Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes  
thee fix'd,  
About t' have spoke, but now, with head declin'd  
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps

*Tarsus*, A city of Cilicia in Asia Minor, birthplace of St. Paul.  
*Javan*, Greece. (See note on page 118.) *Gadire*, Cadiz.

## Samson Agonistes

And words address'd seem into tears dissolv'd,  
Wetting the borders of her silk'n veil :  
But now again she makes address to speak.

*Dal.* With doubtful feet and wavering resolution

I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,  
Which to have merited, without excuse,  
I cannot but acknowledge ; yet if tears  
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew  
In the perverse event than I foresaw)  
My penance hath not slack'n'd, though my  
pardon

No way assur'd. But conjugal affection  
Prevailing over fear, and timorous doubt  
Hath led me on desirous to behold  
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate.  
If aught in my ability may serve  
To light'n what thou suffer'st, and appease  
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,  
Though late, yet in some part to recompense  
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

*Sams.* Out, out hyaena ; these are thy wonted  
. . . arts,

And arts of every woman false like thee,  
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,  
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,  
And reconciliation move with feign'd remorse,  
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,  
Not truly penitent, but chief to try  
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears,  
His virtue or weakness which way to assail :  
Then with more cautious and instructed skill

*Hyaena.* The hyaena was said to feign the voice of a man in the night and so lead on his victim, only to turn on him and devour him.



## A Shorter Milton

Again transgresses, and again submits ;  
That wisest and best men full oft beguill'd  
With goodness principl'd not to reject  
The penitent, but ever to forgive,  
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,  
Entangl'd with a pois'nous bosom snake,  
If not by quick destruction soon cut off  
As I by thee, to ages an example.

*Dal.* Yet hear me Samson ; not that I endeavour

To lessen or extenuate my offence,  
But that on th' other side if it be weigh'd  
By itself, with aggravations not surcharg'd,  
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd  
I may, if possible, thy pardon find  
The easier towards me, or thy hatred less.  
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness  
In me, but incident to all our sex,  
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune  
Of secrets, then with like infirmity  
To publish them, both common female faults :  
Was it not weakness also to make known  
For importunity, that is for nought,  
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety ?  
To what I did thou show'dst me first the way.  
But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not.  
Nor should'st thou have trusted that to woman's  
frailty  
Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.  
Let weakness then with weakness come to parle  
So near related, or the same of kind,  
Thine forgive mine ; that men may censure thine  
The gentler, if severely thou exact not

## Samson Agonistes

More strength from me, than in thyself was found.  
And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,  
The jealousy of love, powerful of sway  
In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee,  
Caus'd what I did ? I saw thee mutable  
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou would'st leave  
me

As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore  
How to endear, and hold thee to me firmest :  
No better way I saw than by importuning  
To learn thy secrets, get into my power  
Thy key of strength and safety : thou wilt say,  
' Why then reveal'd ? ' I was assur'd by those  
Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd  
Against thee but safe custody, and hold :  
That made for me, I knew that liberty  
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,  
While I at home sat full of cares and fears  
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed ;  
Here I should still enjoy thee day and night  
Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philistines',  
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,  
Fearless at home of partners in my love.  
These reasons in love's law have passed for good,  
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps :  
And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much  
woe,

Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.  
Be not unlike all others, not austere  
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.  
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,  
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

*Sams.* How cunningly the sorceress displays  
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine !  
That malice not repentance brought thee hither,

## A Shorter Milton

By this appears : I gave, thou say'st, th' example,  
I led the way ; bitter reproach, but true,  
I to myself was false ere thou to me,  
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,  
Take to thy wicked deed : which when thou seest  
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,  
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather  
Confess it feign'd, weakness is thy excuse,  
And I believe it, weakness to resist  
Philistian gold : if weakness may excuse,  
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,  
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it ?  
All wickedness is weakness : that plea therefore  
With God or man will gain thee no remission.  
But love constrain'd thee ; call it furious rage  
To satisfy thy lust : love seeks to have love ;  
My love how could'st thou hope, who took'st the  
way

To raise in me inexpiable hate,  
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd ?  
In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,  
Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

*Dal.* Since thou determin'st weakness for no  
plea

In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,  
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,  
What sieges girt me round, ere I consented ;  
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,  
The constantest to have yielded without blame.  
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,  
That wrought with me : thou know'st the  
magistrates

And princes of my country came in person,  
Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urg'd,  
Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil duty

## Samson Agonistes

And of religion, press'd how just it was,  
How honourable, how glorious to entrap  
A common enemy, who had destroy'd  
Such numbers of our nation : and the priest  
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,  
Preaching how meritorious with the gods  
It would be to ensnare an irreligious  
Dishonourer of Dagon : what had I  
To oppose against such powerful arguments ?  
Only my love of thee held long debate ;  
And combated in silence all these reasons  
With hard contest : at length that grounded  
maxim

So rife and celebrated in the mouths  
Of wisest men ; that to the public good  
Private respects must yield ; with grave authority  
Took full possession of me and prevail'd ;  
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoining.

*Sams.* I thought where all thy circling wiles  
would end ;  
In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy.  
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,  
Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught  
thee

Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.  
I before all the daughters of my tribe  
And of my nation chose thee from among  
My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,  
Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,  
Not out of levity, but overpower'd  
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing ;  
Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then  
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband ?  
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd :  
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave

## A Shorter Milton

Parents and country ; nor was I their subject,  
Nor under their protection but my own,  
Thou mine, not theirs : if aught against my life  
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,  
Against the law of nature, law of nations,  
No more thy country, but an impious crew  
Of men conspiring to uphold their state  
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends  
For which our country is a name so dear ;  
Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal mov'd  
thee ;

To please thy gods thou didst it ; gods unable  
To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes  
But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction  
Of their own deity, gods cannot be :  
Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd,  
These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,  
Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear ?

*Dal.* In argument with men a woman ever  
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

*Sams.* For want of words no doubt, or lack of  
breath,  
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

*Dal.* I was a fool, too rash, and quite mistaken  
In what I thought would have succeeded best.  
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson,  
Afford me place to show what recompense  
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,  
Misguided : only what remains past cure  
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist  
To afflict thyself in vain : though sight be lost,  
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd  
Where other senses want not their delights  
At home in leisure and domestic ease,  
Exempt from many a care and chance to which

## Samson Agonistes

Eyesight exposes daily men abroad.  
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting  
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee  
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide  
With me, where my redoubl'd love and care  
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,  
May ever tend about thee to old age  
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so suppli'd,  
That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt  
miss.

*Sams.* No, no, of my condition take no care ;  
It fits not ; thou and I long since are twain ;  
Nor think me so unwary or accurst  
To bring my feet again into the snare  
Where once I have been caught ; I know thy  
trains

Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils ;  
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms  
No more on me have power, their force is null'd,  
So much of adder's wisdom I have learnt  
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.  
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all  
men

Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could  
hate me

Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me ;  
How would'st thou use me now, blind, and  
thereby

Deceivable, in most things as a child  
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,  
And last neglected ? How would'st thou insult  
When I must live uxorious to thy will  
In perfect thralldom, how again betray me,  
Bearing my words and doings to the Lords  
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile ?

## A Shorter Milton

This gaol I count the house of liberty  
To thine whose doors my feet shall never enter.

*Dal.* Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.

*Sams.* Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake

My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.  
At distance I forgive thee, go with that ;  
Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works  
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable  
Among illustrious women, faithful wives :  
Cherish thy hast'n'd widowhood with the gold  
Of matrimonial treason : so farewell.

*Dal.* I see thou art implacable, more deaf  
To prayers, than winds and seas, yet winds to seas

Are reconcil'd at length, and sea to shore :  
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,  
Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.  
Why do I humble thus myself, and suing  
For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate ?  
Bid go with evil omen and the brand  
Of infamy upon my name denounc'd ?  
To mix with thy concernments I desist  
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.  
Fame if not double-fac'd is double-mouth'd,  
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds,  
On both his wings, one black, th' other white,  
Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.  
My name perhaps among the circumcis'd  
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,  
To all posterity may stand defam'd,  
With malediction mention'd, and the blot  
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduc'd.  
But in my country where I most desire,

## Samson Agonistes

In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath  
I shall be nam'd among the famousest  
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,  
Living and dead recorded, who to save  
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose  
Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb  
With odours visited and annual flowers.  
Not less renown'd than in Mount Ephraim,  
Jael, who with inhospitable guile  
Smote Sisera sleeping through the temples nail'd.  
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy  
The public marks of honour and reward  
Conferr'd upon me, for the piety  
Which to my country I was judg'd to have shown.  
At this who ever envies or repines  
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

*Chor.* She's gone, a manifest serpent by her  
sting  
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

*Sams.* So let her go, God sent her to debase me,  
And aggravate my folly who committed  
To such a viper his most sacred trust  
Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.

*Chor.* Yet beauty, though injurious, hath  
strange power,  
After offence returning, to regain  
Love once possess'd, nor can be easily  
Repuls'd, without much inward passion felt  
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

*Sams.* Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord  
end,  
Not wedlock-treachery endangering life.

*Chor.* It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,



## A Shorter Milton

Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit  
That woman's love can win or long inherit ;  
But what it is, hard is to say,  
Harder to hit,

(Which way soever men refer it)

Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day  
Or seven, though one should musing sit ;

If any of these or all, the Timnian bride  
Had not so soon preferr'd

Thy paranymp<sup>h</sup>, worthless to thee compar'd,  
Successor in thy bed,

Nor both so loosely disally'd

Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously  
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.

Is it for that such outward ornament

Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts

Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgment scant,

Capacity not rais'd to apprehend

Or value what is best

In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong ?

Or was too much of self-love mix'd,

Of constancy no root infix'd,

That either they love nothing, or not long ?

Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best

Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,

Soft, modest, meek, demure,

Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn

Intestine, far within defensive arms

A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue

Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms

Draws him awry enslav'd

With dotage, and his sense deprav'd

To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.

*Paranymp<sup>h</sup>*, A friend of the bridegroom, who went with him on  
the wedding day to fetch the bride home.

## Samson Agonistes

What pilot so expert but needs must wreck  
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm ?

Favour'd of Heav'n who finds  
One virtuous rarely found,  
That in domestic good combines :  
Happy that house ! his way to peace is smooth :  
But virtue which breaks through all opposition,  
And all temptation can remove,  
Most shines and most is acceptable above.

Therefore God's universal law  
Gave to the man despotic power  
Over his female in due awe,  
Nor from that right to part an hour,  
Smile she or lour :  
So shall he least confusion draw  
On his whole life, not sway'd  
By female usurpation, nor dismay'd.  
But had we best retire, I see a storm ?

*Sams.* Fair days have oft contracted wind and  
rain.

*Chor.* But this another kind of tempest brings.

*Sams.* Be less abstruse, my riddling days are  
past.

*Chor.* Look now for no enchanting voice, nor  
fear

The bait of honied words ; a rougher tongue  
Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,  
The giant Harapha of Gath, his look  
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.  
Comes he in peace ? what wind hath blown him  
hither

I less conjecture than when first I saw  
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way :  
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

*Sams.* Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

## A Shorter Milton

*Chor.* His fraught we soon shall know, he now arrives.

*Har.* I come not Samson, to condole thy chance,  
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,  
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath,  
Men call me Harapha, of stock renown'd  
As Og or Anak and the Emims old  
That Kiriathaim held, thou know'st me now  
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard  
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd  
Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,  
That I was never present on the place  
Of those encounters, where we might have tri'd  
Each other's force in camp or listed field :  
And now am come to see of whom such noise  
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,  
If thy appearance answer loud report.

*Sams.* The way to know were not to see but taste.

*Har.* Dost thou already single me ; I thought  
Gyves and the mill had tam'd thee ? O that  
fortune  
Had brought me to the field where thou art  
fam'd  
To have wrought such wonders with an ass's  
jaw ;  
I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms,  
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown :  
So had the glory of prowess been recover'd  
To Palestine, won by a Philistine.

*Og*, An Amoritish king of Bashan, of gigantic stature. He is reputed to have survived the Flood by wading beside the Ark.

*Anak*, Father of the Anakim ; see notes on pages 198 and 210.

*Emims*, A tribe of gigantic stature, living along the eastern side of the Dead Sea ; related to the Anakim.

*Gyves*, Handcuffs.

## Samson Agonistes

The highest name for valiant acts, that honour  
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,  
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

*Sams.* Boast not of what thou would'st have  
done, but do  
What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy  
hand.

*Har.* To combat with a blind man I disdain,  
And thou hast need much washing to be touch'd.

*Sams.* Such usage as your honourable lords  
Afford me assassinated and betray'd,  
Who durst not with their whole united powers  
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,  
Nor in the house with chamber ambushes  
Close-banded durst attack me, no not sleeping,  
Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold  
Breaking her marriage faith to circumvent me.  
Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd  
Some narrow place inclos'd, where sight may give  
thee,

Or rather flight, no great advantage on me ;  
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet  
And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,  
Vant-brass and greaves, and gauntlet, add thy  
spear

A weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield,  
I only with an oak'n staff will meet thee,  
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd iron,  
Which long shall not withhold me from thy head,  
That in a little time while breath remains thee,  
Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath to boast

*Brigandine*, A coat of mail.

*Habergeon*, Mail for the neck and shoulders.

*Vant-brass*, Armour for the arms.

*Greaves*, Armour for the legs.

## A Shorter Milton

Again in safety what thou would'st have done  
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

*Har.* Thou durst not thus disparage glorious  
arms

Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,  
Their ornament and safety, had not spells  
And black enchantments, some magician's art  
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou  
from Heaven

Feign'dst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,  
Where strength can least abide, though all thy  
hairs

Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back  
Of chaf'd wild boars or ruff'd porcupines.

*Sams.* I know no spells, use no forbidden arts ;  
My trust is in the living God who gave me  
At my nativity this strength, diffus'd  
No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,  
Than thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,  
The pledge of my unviolated vow.

For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,  
Go to his temple, invoke his aid  
With solemnest devotion, spread before him  
How highly it concerns his glory now  
To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,  
Which I to be the power of Israel's God  
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,  
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,  
With th' utmost of his godhead seconded :  
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow  
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

*Har.* Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be,  
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off  
Quite from his people, and delivered up  
Into thy enemies' hand, permitted them

## Samson Agonistes

To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee

Into the common prison, there to grind  
Among the slaves and asses thy comrades,  
As good for nothing else, no better service  
With those thy boist'rous locks, no worthy match  
For valour to assail, nor by the sword  
Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,  
But by the barber's razor best subdu'd.

*Sams.* All these indignities, for such they are  
From thine, these evils I deserve and more,  
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me  
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon  
Whose ear is ever open ; and his eye  
Gracious to readmit the suppliant ;  
In confidence whereof I once again  
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,  
By combat to decide whose god is God,  
Thine or whom I with Israel's sons adore.

*Har.* Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in  
trusting  
He will accept thee to defend his cause,  
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber.

*Sams.* Tongue-doughty giant, how dost thou  
prove me these ?

*Har.* Is not thy nation subject to our lords ?  
Their magistrates confessed it, when they took  
thee

As a league-breaker and deliver'd bound  
Into our hands : for hadst thou not committed  
Notorious murder on those thirty men  
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,  
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of their robes ? .

## A Shorter Milton

The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the  
league,

Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,  
To others did no violence nor spoil.

*Sams.* Among the daughters of the Philistines  
I chose a wife, which argu'd me no foe ;  
And in your city held my nuptial feast :  
But your ill-meaning politician lords,  
Under pretence of bridal friends and guests,  
Appointed to await me thirty spies,  
Who threat'ning cruel death constrain'd the bride  
To wring from me and tell to them my secret,  
That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd.

When I perceiv'd all set on enmity,  
As on my enemies, wherever chanc'd,  
I us'd hostility, and took their spoil  
To pay my underminers in their coin.  
My nation was subjected to your lords.  
It was the force of conquest ; force with force  
Is well ejected when the conquer'd can.

But I a private person, whom my country  
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd  
Single rebellion and did hostile acts.

I was no private but a person rais'd  
With strength sufficient and command from  
Heav'n

To free my country ; if their servile minds  
Me their deliverer sent would not receive,  
But to their masters gave me up for nought,  
Th' unworthier they ; whence to this day they  
serve.

I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,  
• And had perform'd it if my known offence  
Had not disabl'd me, not all your force :  
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellat

## Samson Agonistes

Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,  
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,  
As a petty enterprise of small enforce.

*Har.* With thee a man condemn'd, a slave  
enroll'd,  
Due by the law to capital punishment ?  
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

*Sams.* Can'st thou for this, vain boaster, to  
survey me,  
To descant on my strength, and give thy ver-  
dict ?

Come nearer, part not hence so slight inform'd ;  
But take good heed my hand survey not thee.

*Har.* O Baal-zebub ! can my ears unus'd  
Hear these dishonours, and not render death ?

*Sams.* No man withholds thee, nothing from  
thy hand

Fear I incurable ; bring up thy van,  
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.

*Har.* This insolence other kind of answer fits.

*Sams.* Go baffl'd coward, lest I run upon thee,  
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,  
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,  
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down  
To the hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.

*Har.* By Astaroth ere long thou shalt lament  
These braveries in irons loaden on thee.

*Chor.* His giantship is gone, somewhat crest-  
fall'n,  
Stalking with less unconsci'nable strides,  
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.

*Sams.* I dread him not, nor all his giant brood,  
Though fame divulge him father of five sons  
All of gigantic size, Goliah chief.

*Chor.* He will directly to the Lords, I fear,



## A Shorter Milton

And with malicious counsel stir them up  
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.

*Sams.* He must allege some cause, and offer'd  
fight

Will not dare mention, lest a question rise  
Whether he durst accept the offer or not,  
And that he durst not plain enough appear'd.  
Much more affliction than already felt  
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain ;  
If they intend advantage of my labours  
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping  
With no small profit daily to my owners.  
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove  
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence,  
The worst that he can give, to me the best.  
Yet so it may fall out, because their end  
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine  
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.

*Chor.* Oh how comely it is and how reviving  
To the spirits of just men long oppressed !  
When God into the hands of their deliverer  
Puts invincible might  
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,  
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men  
Hardy and industrious to support  
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue  
The righteous and all such as honour truth ;  
He all their ammunition  
And feats of war defeats  
With plain heroic magnitude of mind  
And celestial vigour arm'd,  
Their armouries and magazines contemns,  
Renders them useless, while  
With winged expedition  
Swift as the lightning glance he executes

## Samson Agonistes

His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd  
Lose their defence distracted and amaz'd.

But patience is more oft the exercise  
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,  
Making them each his own deliverer,  
And victor over all  
That tyranny or fortune can inflict,  
Either of these is in thy lot,  
Samson, with might endu'd  
Above the sons of men ; but sight bereav'd  
May chance to number thee with those  
Whom Patience finally must crown.  
This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,  
Labouring thy mind

More than the working day thy hands,  
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind.  
For I descry this way  
Some other tending, in his hand  
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,  
Comes on amain, speed in his look.  
By his habit I discern him now  
A public officer, and now at hand.  
His message will be short and voluble.

*Off.* Hebrews, the pris'ner Samson here I seek.

*Chor.* His manacles remark him, there he sits.

*Off.* Samson, to thee our Lords thus bid me  
say ;

This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,  
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games ;  
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,  
And now some public proof thereof require  
To honour this great feast, and great assembly ;  
Rise therefore with all speed and come along,  
Where I will see thee hearten'd and fresh clad  
To appear as fits before th' illustrious Lords.

## A Shorter Milton

*Sams.* Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore  
tell them,  
Our Law forbids at their religious rites  
My presence ; for that cause I cannot come.

*Off.* This answer, be assur'd, will not content  
them.

*Sams.* Have they not sword-players, and ev'ry  
sort  
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,  
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,  
But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,  
And over-labour'd at their public mill,  
To make them sport with blind activity ?  
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels  
On my refusal to distress me more,  
Or make a game of my calamities ?  
Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.

*Off.* Regard thyself, this will offend them highly.

*Sams.* Myself ? my conscience and internal  
peace.

Can they think me so broken, so debas'd  
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever  
Will condescend to such absurd commands ?  
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,  
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief  
To show them feats, and play before their god,  
The worst of all indignities, yet on me  
Join'd with extreme contempt ? I will not come.

*Off.* My message was impos'd on me with speed,  
Brooks no delay : is this thy resolution ?

*Sams.* So take it with what speed thy message  
needs.

*Off.* I am sorry what this stoutness will produce

*Sams.* Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow  
indeed.

## Samson Agonistes

*Chor.* Consider, Samson ; matters now are  
strain'd

Up to the highth, whether to hold or break ;  
He's gone, and who knows how he may report  
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame ?  
Expect another message more imperious,  
More lordly thund'ring than thou well wilt bear.

*Sams.* Shall I abuse this consecrated gift  
Of strength, again returning with my hair  
After my great transgression, so requite  
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin  
By prostituting holy things to idols ;  
A Nazarite in place abominable  
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon ?  
Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,  
What act more execrably unclean, profane ?

*Chor.* Yet with this strength thou serv'st the  
Philistines,  
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean.

*Sams.* Not in their idol-worship, but by labour  
Honest and lawful to deserve my food  
Of those who have me in their civil power.

*Chor.* Where the heart joins not, outward acts  
defile not.

*Sams.* Where outward force constrains, the  
sentence holds ;  
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,  
Not dragging ? the Philistian Lords command.  
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,  
I do it freely ; venturing to displease  
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,  
Set God behind : which in his jealousy  
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.  
Yet that he may dispense with me or thee  
Present in temples at idolatrous rites

## A Shorter Milton

For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.

*Chor.* How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.

*Sams.* Be of good courage, I begin to feel  
Some rousing motions in me which dispose  
To something extraordinary my thoughts.  
I with this messenger will go along,  
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour  
Our Law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.  
If there be aught of presage in the mind,  
This day will be remarkable in my life  
By some great act, or of my days the last.

*Chor.* In time thou hast resolv'd, the man returns.

*Off.* Samson, this second message from our Lords  
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave,  
Our captive, at the public mill our drudge,  
And dar'st thou at our sending and command  
Dispute thy coming? come without delay;  
Or we shall find such engines to assail  
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,  
Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than a rock.

*Sams.* I could be well content to try their art,  
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious.  
Yet knowing their advantages too many,  
Because they shall not trail me through their  
streets

Like a wild beast, I am content to go.  
Masters' commands come with a power resistless  
To such as owe them absolute subjection;  
And for a life who will not change his purpose?  
(So mutable are all the ways of men)  
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply  
Scandalous or forbidden in our Law.

## Samson Agonistes

*Off.* I praise thy resolution, doff these links :  
By this compliance thou wilt win the Lords  
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

*Sams.* Brethren farewell, your company along  
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them  
To see me girt with friends ; and how the sight  
Of me as of a common enemy,  
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them  
I know not. Lords are lordliest in their wine ;  
And the well-feasted priest then soonest fir'd  
With zeal, if aught religion seem concern'd :  
No less the people on their holy-days  
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable ;  
Happ'n what may, of me expect to hear  
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy  
Our God, our Law, my nation, or myself,  
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

*Chor.* Go, and the Holy One  
Of Israel be thy guide  
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his  
name

Great among the heathen round :  
Send thee the Angel of thy birth, to stand  
Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field  
Rode up in flames after his message told  
Of thy conception, and be now a shield  
Of fire ; that Spirit that first rush'd on thee  
In the camp of Dan  
Be efficacious in thee now at need.  
For never was from Heaven imparted  
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,  
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.  
But wherefore comes old Manoah in such haste  
With youthful steps ? much livelier than ere  
while

## A Shorter Milton

He seems : supposing here to find his son,  
Or of him bringing to us some glad news ?

*Man.* Peace with you brethren ; my inducement  
hither

Was not at present here to find my son,  
By order of the Lords new parted hence  
To come and play before them at their feast.  
I heard all as I came, the city rings  
And numbers thither flock, I had no will,  
Lest I should see him forc'd to things unseemly.  
But that which moved my coming now was chiefly  
To give ye part with me what hope I have  
With good success to work his liberty.

*Chor.* That hope would much rejoice us to  
partake

With thee ; say reverend Sire, we thirst to hear.

*Man.* I have attempted one by one the Lords  
Either at home, or through the high street passing,  
With supplication prone and father's tears  
To accept of ransom for my son their pris'ner.  
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,  
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite ;  
That part most reverenc'd Dagon and his priests,  
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim  
Private reward, for which both God and State  
They easily would set to sale, a third  
More generous far and civil, who confess'd  
They had enough reveng'd, having reduc'd  
Their foe to misery beneath their fears,  
The rest was magnanimity to remit,  
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.  
What noise or shout was that ? it tore the sky.

*Chor.* Doubtless the people shouting to behold  
Their once great dread, captive, and blind before  
them,

## Samson Agonistes

Or at some proof of strength before them shown.

*Man.* His ransom, if my whole inheritance  
May compass it, shall willingly be paid  
And number'd down : much rather I shall choose  
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,  
And he in that calamitous prison left.  
No, I am fix'd not to part hence without him.  
For his redemption all my patrimony,  
If need be, I am ready to forego  
And quit : not wanting him, I shall want nothing.

*Chor.* Fathers are wont to lay up for their  
sons,

Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all ;  
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,  
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son,  
Made older than thy age through eyesight lost.

*Man.* It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,  
And view him sitting in the house, ennobl'd  
With all those high exploits by him achiev'd,  
And on his shoulders waving down those locks,  
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd :  
And I persuade me God had not permitted  
His strength again to grow up with his hair  
Garrison'd round about him like a camp  
Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose  
To use him further yet in some great service,  
Not to sit idle with so great a gift  
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.  
And since his strength with eyesight was not lost,  
God will restore him eyesight to his strength.

*Chor.* Thy hopes are not ill founded nor seem  
vain

Of his delivery, and thy joy thereon  
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a father's love,  
In both which we, as next participate.



## A Shorter Milton

*Man.* I know your friendly minds and—O what noise !

Mercy of Heav'n what hideous noise was that !  
Horribly loud unlike the former shout.

*Chor.* Noise call you it or universal groan  
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd,  
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that  
noise,  
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

*Man.* Of ruin indeed methought I heard the  
noise,  
Oh it continues, they have slain my son.

*Chor.* Thy son is rather slaying them, that  
outcry  
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

*Man.* Some dismal accident it needs must be ;  
What shall we do, stay here or run and see ?

*Chor.* Best keep together here, lest running  
thither

We unawares run into danger's mouth.  
This evil on the Philistines is fall'n,  
From whom could else a general cry be heard ?  
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here,  
From other hands we need not much to fear.  
What if his eyesight (for to Israel's God  
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,  
He now be dealing dole among his foes,  
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way ?

*Man.* That were a joy presumptuous to be  
thought.

*Chor.* Yet God hath wrought things as incredible  
For his people of old ; what hinders now ?

*Man.* He can I know, but doubt to think he  
will ;

## Samson Agonistes

Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.  
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

*Chor.* Of good or bad so great, of bad the  
sooner ;

For evil news rides post, while good news baits.  
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,  
An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe.

*Mess.* O whither shall I run, or which way  
fly

The sight of this so horrid spectacle  
Which erst my eyes beheld and yet behold ;  
For dire imagination still pursues me.  
But providence or instinct of nature seems,  
Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce consulted  
To have guided me aright, I know not how,  
To thee first reverend Manoa, and to these  
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,  
As at some distance from the place of horror,  
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

*Man.* The accident was loud, and here before  
thee

With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not,  
No preface needs, thou seest we long to know.

*Mess.* It would burst forth, but I recover breath  
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

*Man.* Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

*Mess.* Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are  
fall'n,

All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

*Man.* Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not  
saddest

The desolation of a hostile city.

*Mess.* Feed on that first, there may in grief be  
surfeit.

*Man.* Relate by whom.

## A Shorter Milton

*Mess.* By Samson.

*Man.* That still lessens

The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

*Mess.* Ah Manoa, I refrain, too suddenly  
To utter what will come at last too soon ;  
Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption  
Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

*Man.* Suspense in news is torture, speak them  
out.

*Mess.* Then take the worst in brief, Samson is  
dead.

*Man.* The worst indeed, O all my hopes de-  
feated

To free him hence ! but death who sets all free  
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.  
What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd  
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves  
Abortive as the first-born bloom of spring  
Nipt with the lagging rear of winter's frost.  
Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first,  
How died he ? death to life is crown or shame.  
All by him fell thou say'st, by whom fell he,  
What glorious hand gave Samson his death's  
wound ?

*Mess.* Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

*Man.* Wearied with slaughter then or how ?  
explain.

*Mess.* By his own hands.

*Man.* Self-violence ? what cause  
Brought him so soon at variance with himself  
Among his foes ?

*Mess.* Inevitable cause  
At once both to destroy and be destroy'd ;  
The edifice where all were met to see him  
Upon their heads and on his own he pull'd.

## Samson Agonistes

*Man.* O lastly over-strong against thyself !  
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.  
More than enough we know ; but while things yet  
Are in confusion, give us if thou canst,  
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,  
Relation more particular and distinct.

*Mess.* Occasions drew me early to this city,  
And as the gates I enter'd with sunrise,  
The morning trumpets festival proclaim'd  
Through each high street : little I had dispatch'd  
When all abroad was rumour'd that this day  
Samson should be brought forth to show the  
people

Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games ;  
I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded  
Not to be absent at that spectacle.

The building was a spacious theatre  
Half-round on two main pillars vaulted high,  
With seats where all the Lords and each degree  
Of sort, might sit in order to behold,  
The other side was op'n, where the throng  
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand ;  
I among these aloof obscurely stood.

The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice  
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and  
wine,

When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately  
Was Samson as a public servant brought,  
In their state livery clad ; before him pipes  
And timbrels, on each side went armed guards,  
Both horse and foot before him and behind  
Archers, and slingers, cataphracts and spears.  
At sight of him the people with a shout

## A Shorter Milton

Rifted the air clamouring their god with praise,  
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.  
He patient but undaunted where they led him,  
Came to the place, and what was set before him  
Which without help of eye, might be assay'd,  
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd  
All with incredible, stupendous force,  
None daring to appear antagonist.  
At length for intermission sake they led him  
Between the pillars ; he his guide requested  
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)  
As over-tir'd to let him lean awhile  
With both his arms on those two massy pillars  
That to the arched roof gave main support.  
He unsuspecting led him ; which when Samson  
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclin'd,  
And eyes fast fixt he stood, as one who pray'd,  
Or some great matter in his mind revolv'd.  
At last with head erect thus cried aloud,  
' Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd  
I have perform'd, as reason was, obeying,  
Not without wonder or delight beheld.  
Now of my own accord such other trial  
I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater ;  
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.'  
This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,  
As with the force of winds and waters pent,  
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars  
With horrible convulsion to and fro,  
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came and  
drew  
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder  
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,  
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,  
Their choice nobility and flower, not only

## Samson Agonistes

Of this but each Philistian city round  
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.  
Samson with these immix'd, inevitably  
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself ;  
The vulgar only 'scap'd who stood without.

*Chor.* O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious !  
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd  
The work for which thou wast foretold  
To Israel, and now ly'st victorious  
Among thy slain self-kill'd  
Not willingly, but tangl'd in the fold  
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd  
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more  
Than all thy life had slain before.

*Semichor.* While their hearts were jocund and  
sublime,  
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,  
And fat regorg'd of bulls and goats,  
Chanting their idol, and preferring  
Before our living Dread who dwells  
In Silo his bright sanctuary :  
Among them he a spirit of frenzy sent,  
Who hurt their minds,  
And urg'd them on with mad desire  
To call in haste for their destroyer ;  
They only set on sport and play  
Unweeingly importun'd  
Their own destruction to come speedy upon  
them.

So fond are mortal men  
Fall'n into wrath divine,  
As their own ruin on themselves to invite,  
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,

*Silo.* The ark of God remained in Shiloh from the time of  
Joshua to that of Eli, over 400 years.

## A Shorter Milton

And with blindness internal struck.

*Semichor.* But he though blind of sight,  
Despis'd and thought extinguish'd quite,  
With inward eyes illuminated  
His fiery virtue rous'd  
From under ashes into sudden flame,  
And as an ev'ning dragon came,  
Assailant on the perched roosts,  
And nests in order rang'd  
Of tame villatic fowl ; but as an eagle  
His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.  
So virtue giv'n for lost,  
Depress'd, and overthrown, as seem'd,  
Like that self-begott'n bird  
In the Arabian woods embost,  
That no second knows nor third,  
And lay ere while a holocaust,  
From out her ashy womb now teem'd  
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most  
When most unactive deem'd,  
And though her body die, her fame survives,  
A secular bird ages of lives.

*Man.* Come, come, no time for lamentation  
now,  
Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself  
Like Samson, and heroically hath finish'd  
A life heroic, on his enemies  
Fully reveng'd, hath left them years of mourning,  
And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor  
Through all Philistian bounds. To Israel  
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them

*Villatic fowl*, Barndoor fowl.

*Self-begotten bird*, The phoenix. (See note on page 176.)

*Caphtor*. The Philistines came originally from the island of Caphtor, or Crete.

## Samson Agonistes

Find courage to lay hold on this occasion,  
To himself and father's house eternal fame ;  
And which is best and happiest yet, all this  
With God not parted from him, as was fear'd,  
But favouring and assisting to the end.  
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.  
Let us go find the body where it lies  
Soak'd in his enemies' blood, and from the  
stream

With lavers pure and cleansing herbs wash off  
The clotted gore. I with what speed the while  
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)  
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends  
To fetch him hence and solemnly attend  
With silent obsequy and funeral train  
Home to his father's house : there will I build  
him

A monument, and plant it round with shade  
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,  
With all his trophies hung, and acts inroll'd  
In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.  
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,  
And from his memory inflame their breasts  
To matchless valour, and adventures high :  
The virgins also shall on feastful days  
Visit his tomb with flowers, only bewailing  
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,  
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

*Chor.* All is best, though we oft doubt,  
What th' unsearchable dispose  
Of highest wisdom brings about,  
And ever best found in the close.



## A Shorter Milton

Oft he seems to hide his face,  
But unexpectedly returns  
And to his faithful champion hath in place  
Bore witness gloriously ; whence Gaza mourns  
And all that band them to resist  
His uncontrollable intent,  
His servants he with new acquist  
Of true experience from this great event  
With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,  
And calm of mind all passion spent.

*Acquist, Acquisition.*

## SELECTIONS FROM MILTON'S PROSE WORKS

### *Against the persecution of Books*

I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the church and commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men ; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors ; for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are ; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth ; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book ; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image ; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth ; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is true, no age can restore a life, whereof, perhaps, there is no great loss ; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the

## A Shorter Milton

living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books ; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom ; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself ; slays an immortality rather than a life.

*Areopagitica.*

### *Experience, the test of Virtue*

As therefore the state of man now is ; what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear, without the knowledge of evil ? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather ; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure.

*Areopagitica.*

## Prose Works : Selections

### *Milton's visit to Galileo*

And lest some should persuade, lords and commons, that these arguments of learned men's discouragement at this your order are mere flourishes, and not real, I could recount what I have seen and heard in other countries, where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes ; when I have sat among their learned men (for that honour I had) and been counted happy to be born in such a place of philosophic freedom, as they supposed England was, while themselves did nothing but bemoan the servile condition in which learning amongst them was brought : that this was it which had damped the glory of Italian wits ; that nothing had been there written now these many years but flattery and fustian. There it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought. And though I knew that England then was groaning loudest under the prelatical yoke, nevertheless I took it as pledge of future happiness, that other nations were so persuaded of her liberty.

*Areopagitica.*

### *The Folly of Press Censorship*

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks : methinks

## A Shorter Milton

I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth,  
and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full  
midday beam ; purging and unscaling her long-  
abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly  
radiance ; while the whole noise of timorous and  
flocking birds, with those also that love the  
twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means,  
and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a  
year of sects and schisms.

What should ye do then, should ye suppress all  
this flowery crop of knowledge and new light  
sprung up and yet springing daily in this city ?  
Should ye set an oligarchy of twenty engrossers  
over it, to bring a famine upon our minds again,  
when we shall know nothing but what is measured  
to us by their bushel ? Believe it, lords and  
commons ! they who counsel ye to such a sup-  
pressing, do as good as bid ye suppress yourselves ;  
and I will soon show how. If it be desired to  
know the immediate cause of all this free writing  
and free speaking, there cannot be assigned a  
truer than your own mild, and free, and humane  
government ; it is the liberty, lords and commons,  
which your own valorous and happy counsels  
have purchased us ; liberty which is the nurse of  
all great wits : this is that which hath rarified  
and enlightened our spirits like the influence of  
Heaven : this is that which hath enfranchised,  
enlarged, and lifted up our apprehensions degrees  
above themselves.

*Areopagitica.*

## Prose Works : Selections

### *The joys and uses of Education*

I shall detain you no longer in the demonstration of what we should not do, but straight conduct ye to a hill-side, where I will point ye out the right path of a virtuous and noble education ; laborious indeed at the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds on every side that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming. I doubt not but ye shall have more ado to drive our dullest and laziest youth, our stocks and stubs, from the infinite desire of such a happy nurture, than we have now to hale and drag our choicest and hopefullest wits to that asinine feast of sowthistles and brambles which is commonly set before them as all the food and entertainment of their tenderest and most docible age. I call therefore a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war.

*On Education.*

### *The Inhabitants of Britain*

For Britain, to speak a truth not often spoken, as it is a land fruitful enough of men stout and courageous in war, so it is naturally not over-fertile of men able to govern justly and prudently in peace, trusting only in their mother-wit ; who consider not justly, that civility, prudence, love

## A Shorter Milton

of the public good, more than of money or vain honour, are to this soil in a manner outlandish ; grow not here, but in minds well implanted with solid and elaborate breeding, too impolitic else and rude, if not headstrong and intractable to the industry and virtue either of executing or understanding true civil government. Valiant indeed, and prosperous to win a field ; but to know the end and reason of winning, unjudicious and unwise : in good or bad success, alike unteachable. For the sun, which we want, ripens wits as well as fruits ; and as wine and oil are imported to us from abroad, so must ripe understanding, and many civil virtues, be imported into our minds from foreign writings, and examples of best ages : we shall else miscarry still, and come short in the attempts of any great enterprise. Hence did their victories prove fruitless as their losses dangerous : and left them still conquering under the same grievances, that men suffer conquered.

*History of Britain.*

### *Discipline*

And certainly discipline is not only the removal of disorder ; but if any visible shape can be given to divine things, the very visible shape and image of virtue, whereby she is not only seen in the regular gestures and motions of her heavenly paces as she walks, but also makes the harmony of her voice audible to mortal ears. Yea, the angels themselves, in whom no disorder is feared, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into

## Prose Works : Selections

their celestial principedoms and satrapies, according as God himself has writ his imperial decrees through the great provinces of Heaven. The state also of the blessed in Paradise, though never so perfect, is not therefore left without discipline, whose golden surveying reed marks out and measures every quarter and circuit of the New Jerusalem. Yet it is not to be conceived, that those eternal effluences of sanctity and love in the glorified saints should by this means be confined and cloyed with repetition of that which is prescribed, but that our happiness may orb itself into a thousand vagancies of glory and delight, and with a kind of excentrical equation be, as it were, an invariable planet of joy and felicity ; how much less can we believe that God would leave his frail and feeble, though not less beloved church here below, to the perpetual stumble of conjecture and disturbance in this our dark voyage, without the card and compass of discipline ?

*Reason of Church Government.*

### *True Religion*

I never knew that time in England, when men of truest religion were not counted sectaries : but wisdom now, valour, justice, constancy, prudence united and embodied to defend religion and our liberties, both by word and deed, is counted schism and faction.

Thus in a graceless age things of pious praise

*Sectaries*, Those who disagreed with the teaching of the established church.



## A Shorter Milton

and imitation under a right name, to make them infamous and hateful to the people, are mis-called. Certainly, if ignorance and perverseness will needs be national and universal, then they who adhere to wisdom and to truth, are not therefore to be blamed, for being so few as to seem a sect or faction. But in my opinion it goes not ill with that people where these virtues grow so numerous and well joined together, as to resist and make head against the rage and torrent of that boisterous folly and superstition, that possesses and hurries on the vulgar sort. This therefore we may conclude to be a high honour done us from God, and a special mark of his favour, whom he hath selected as the sole remainder, after all these changes and commotions, to stand upright and steadfast in his cause; dignified with the defence of truth and public liberty; while others, who aspired to be the top of the zealots, and had almost brought religion to a kind of trading monopoly, have not only by their late silence and neutrality belied their profession, but foundered themselves and their consciences, to comply with enemies in that wicked cause and interest, which they have too often cursed in others, to prosper now in the same themselves.

*Eikonoklastes.*

### *England's Gratitude to God*

O how much more glorious will those former deliverances appear, when we shall know them not only to have saved us from great miseries past,

## Prose Works : Selections

but to have reserved us for greatest happiness to come ! Hitherto thou hast but freed us, and that not fully, from the unjust and tyrannous claim of thy foes ; now unite us entirely, and appropriate us to thyself, tie us everlastingly in willing homage to the prerogative of thy eternal throne. . . .

Then, amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one may perhaps be heard offering at high strains in new and lofty measure to sing and celebrate thy divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land throughout all ages ; whereby this great and warlike nation, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her whole vices, may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day, when thou, the eternal and shortly expected king, shall open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and distributing national honours and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shall put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth ; where they undoubtedly, that by their labours, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall receive above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities, legions, and thrones in their glorious titles, and in supereminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever.

*Of Reformation in England.*

## A Shorter Milton

### *The relationship of human nature and divine truth*

If any, therefore, who shall hap to read this discourse, hath been through misadventure ill engaged in this contracted evil here complained of, and finds the fits and workings of a high impatience frequently upon him ; of all those wild words which men in misery think to ease themselves by uttering, let him not open his lips against the providence of Heaven, or tax the ways of God and his divine truth ; for they are equal, easy, and not burdensome ; nor do they ever cross the just and reasonable desires of men, nor involve this our portion of mortal life into a necessity of sadness and malcontent, by laws commanding over the unreducible antipathies of nature, sooner or later found, but allow us to remedy and shake off those evils into which human error hath led us through the midst of our best intentions, and to support our incident extremities by that authentic precept of sovereign charity, whose grand commission is to do and to dispose over all the ordinances of God to man, that love and truth may advance each other to everlasting.

*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.*

*' The good old Cause '*

What I have spoken, is the language of that which is not called amiss ' The good old Cause ' :

## Prose Works : Selections

if it seem strange to any, it will not seem more strange, I hope, than convincing to backsliders. Thus much I should perhaps have said, though I were sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones ; and had none to cry to, but with the prophet, ' O earth, earth, earth ! ' To tell the very soil itself, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. Nay, though what I have spoke should happen (which thou suffer not, who didst create mankind free ! nor thou next, who didst redeem us from being servants of men !) to be the last words of our expiring liberty. But I trust I shall have spoken persuasion to abundance of sensible and ingenuous men ; to some, perhaps, whom God may raise from these stones to become children of reviving liberty ; and may reclaim, though they seem now, choosing them a captain back for Egypt, to bethink themselves a little, and consider whither they are rushing ; to exhort this torrent also of the people, not to be so impetuous, but to keep their due channel ; and at length recovering and uniting their better resolutions, now that they see already how open and unbounded the insolence and rage is of our common enemies, to stay the ruinous proceedings, justly and timely fearing to what a precipice of destruction the deluge of this epidemic madness would hurry us, through the general defection of a misguided and abused multitude.

*Ready and Easy Way to establish a  
Free Commonwealth.*

## A Shorter Milton

### *In praise of Cromwell*

*(This passage, translated from one of Milton's Latin pamphlets, shows his admiration for the Lord Protector)*

In this state of desolation, to which we were reduced, you, O Cromwell ! alone remained to conduct the government, and to save the country. We all willingly yield the palm of sovereignty to your unrivalled ability and virtue, except the few among us, who, either ambitious of honours which they have not the capacity to sustain, or who envy those which are conferred on one more worthy than themselves, or else who do not know that nothing in the world is more pleasing to God, more agreeable to reason, more politically just, or more generally useful, than that the supreme power should be vested in the best and wisest of men. Such, O Cromwell, all acknowledge you to be ; such are the services which you have rendered, as the leader of our councils, the general of our armies, and the father of your country. For this is the tender appellation by which all the good among us salute you from the very soul. Other names you neither have nor could endure ; and you deservedly reject that pomp of title which attracts the gaze and admiration of the multitude. For what is a title but a certain definite mode of dignity ; but actions such as yours surpass, not only the bounds of our admiration, but our titles ; and, like the points of pyramids, which are lost in the clouds, they soar above the possibilities of titular commendation. . . .

Often reflect what a dear pledge the beloved

## Prose Works : Selections

land of your nativity has entrusted to your care ; and that liberty which she once expected only from the chosen flower of her talents and her virtues, she now expects from you only, and by you only hopes to obtain. Revere the fond expectations which we cherish, the solicitudes of your anxious country ; revere the looks and the wounds of your brave companions in arms, who, under your banners, have so strenuously fought for liberty ; revere the shades of those who perished in the contest ; revere also the opinions and the hopes which foreign states entertain concerning us, who promise to themselves so many advantages from that liberty which we have so bravely acquired, from the establishment of that new government which has begun to shed its splendour on the world, which, if it be suffered to vanish like a dream, would involve us in the deepest abyss of shame ; and lastly, revere yourself ; and, after having endured so many sufferings and encountered so many perils for the sake of liberty, do not suffer it, now it is obtained, either to be violated by yourself, or in any one instance impaired by others. You cannot be truly free unless we are free too : for such is the nature of things, that he who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own and become a slave.

*Second Defence of the People of England.*

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